

10
48

LIBRARY

OF THE

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,

AT

PRINCETON, N. J.

DONATION OF

SAMUEL AGNEW,

OF PHILADELPHIA, PA.

Letter..

March 25th 1858

No.

BX 9843 .J8 C5

Judd, Sylvester, 1813-1853.

The Church, in a series of
discourses







THE CHURCH:

IN

A SERIES OF DISCOURSES.

BY

REV. SYLVESTER JUDD,

PASTOR OF CHRIST CHURCH, AUGUSTA, MAINE.

“In promoting the influence of Christianity, the main duty of an enlightened Christian at the present day is to labor that it may be better understood; and the views and results to which a few intelligent scholars may have arrived must be made the common property of the community.” — ANDREWS NORTON.

B O S T O N :

CROSBY, NICHOLS, AND COMPANY,

111 WASHINGTON STREET.

1854.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1854, by
CROSBY, NICHOLS, AND COMPANY,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Massachusetts.

C A M B R I D G E :
METCALF AND COMPANY, PRINTERS TO THE UNIVERSITY.

EDITOR'S PREFACE.

THE publication of this volume of Sermons is the result of several considerations. The one which I have felt to be most important, and which is entirely proper to be stated here, arises from the fact that the author himself intended to give some or all of them to the press, in connection with others on kindred topics, which he was expecting his clerical brethren in Maine would contribute to the object he had in view. This purpose appears in a letter which he addressed, about a month before his decease, to his highly valued friend, Rev. Cazneau Palfrey, of Belfast. In it he writes as follows:—

“ It has seemed to me that we ought to publish to the world some of our Church principles, views, and plans. There is a spirit of inquiry awake, yet there is hardly a printed word that can be got hold of. Our own people, no less than others, need to see the thing in print. It is matter to be pondered. The

'Report' of our State Convention at Portland* does not explain itself to anybody. I am sorry no 'notes' accompanied it.

"I propose that there be published a book of this sort: 'The Church: in a Series of Discourses, by several Clergymen of the Unitarian Church of Maine.' I am willing to take all the risk of publication. What I want is, that any of us, whose minds have been exercised on the subject, should give the public a Discourse upon it, — you take up one point, I another, and so on. I want we should show a kind of organic, unitary front. For my own part, I have several Discourses which I might put into such a volume."

I have no special clew to the particular sermons which Mr. Judd regarded as best expressing the views he desired to commend to general notice, and I am not sure that my selection is such a one as he would have made for himself. Still, I feel no hesitation in offering the following Sermons to the public, as I can hardly be mistaken in supposing they come fully within the scope of the plan indicated in the letter from which I have quoted. They appear to me to stand symmetrically around the central point of interest, and I believe there will be found in them

* See Appendix, Note A.

a unity and logical connection with each other, and an exactness of statement and fulness of illustration, quite sufficient to enable the general reader to understand the author's true position on the topics which he has treated, and to take from every fair-minded person all excuse for any misapprehension or misrepresentation of his general drift and real aim. While they are eminently didactic in their character, they are yet wholly unambitious in style, and were, in fact, prepared and delivered in the usual course of ministerial labor. But the earnestness and profound sincerity of their tone are calculated to fix the attention, when once enlisted, on the great theme which he discusses, and hold it until the whole series shall be perused. Such, at least, is the hope in which the volume is now committed to the public.

JOSEPH H. WILLIAMS.

AUGUSTA, *January* 6, 1854.



CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM	PAGE 1
-----------------------------	-----------

SERMON II.

GOSPEL CONVERSION	15
-----------------------------	----

SERMON III.

CHRISTIAN OBLIGATIONS UNIVERSAL	29
---	----

SERMON IV.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?	48
-------------------------------	----

SERMON V.

BIRTH-RELATION TO THE CHURCH	61
--	----

SERMON VI.

THE CHURCH, ILLUSTRATED BY THE FAMILY AND THE STATE	83
---	----

SERMON VII.

THE CHURCH HEREDITABLE	103
----------------------------------	-----

SERMON VIII.

WE SEND CHILDREN TO HEAVEN, BUT DARE NOT ADMIT THEM TO THE CHURCH	139
--	-----

SERMON IX.

CHILDREN TO BE COMMUNICANTS	149
---------------------------------------	-----

SERMON X.

EDUCATION, CONSIDERED AS THE GREAT CHRISTIAN LAW	178
--	-----

SERMON XI.

"WE THINK IN WORDS"	199
-------------------------------	-----

SERMON XII.

THE SABBATH SCHOOL	225
------------------------------	-----

SERMON XIII.

THE COMMUNION	239
-------------------------	-----

SERMON XIV.

THE GOSPEL: GOOD NEWS TO ALL PEOPLE	255
---	-----

APPENDIX	273
--------------------	-----

SERMONS.

SERMON I.



CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

I INDEED BAPTIZE YOU WITH WATER UNTO REPENTANCE ; BUT HE THAT COMETH AFTER ME IS MIGHTIER THAN I, WHOSE SHOES I AM NOT WORTHY TO BEAR : HE SHALL BAPTIZE YOU WITH THE HOLY GHOST, AND WITH FIRE. — Matt iii. 11.

My subject to-day is Baptism. I purpose to explain the meaning of that which so often appears in the New Testament under this name. I venture to affirm that Christian baptism, that is, the baptism introduced and enjoined by Christ, imports a certain spiritual effect, and not a watery application ; that the essential idea of the term is spiritual ; that the use of water is non-essential.

“ Baptizing with fire ” signifies the cleansing, purifying, enlightening, beautifying nature of Christ’s baptism, its vivifying and ennobling power. It is represented by fire, says Adam Clark, “ because it was to illuminate and invigorate the soul, penetrate every part, and assimilate the whole to the image of God.” The Fathers abound in gross and fanciful conceptions on the subject. Origen and Lactantius supposed there was a river of fire, like the Phlege-

thon of the heathen, through which men were to pass. Chrysostom approaches a more reasonable view, when he says the word denotes the superabundant graces of the spirit.

“He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.” The definite article is wanting in the original of the text. The term “Holy Ghost” in many cases in the New Testament means holiness, or the conjoint product of man’s spirit and God’s spirit. He shall baptize you with holiness and with fire, is a form of expression which gives some idea of the purport of the passage. “It is impossible,” says Dr. Furness, “to convey the full force of this word Ghost or, Spirit in a translation. The original word is more comprehensive than the word “Spirit.” It signifies also air, wind; and the meaning of John is, “Water is the symbol of my office, but the power of him who is coming after me may be signified by far subtler and more searching elements, wind and fire.” The spirit of the passage, then, I take to be this: He shall baptize you with that which is holy and pure, with that which cleanses and refines, elevates and sanctifies.

1. Our text, then, affirms that Christ’s baptism was spiritual, and not aqueous. I indeed baptize you with water, but he that cometh after me shall baptize you with something else, “with the Holy Ghost and with fire.” John, the forerunner of Christ, practised water baptism. Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, went out to him, and were baptized of him in Jordan. Yet he says, One mightier than I approaches, one whose

shoes I am not worthy to bear, one so much superior to me that I am not fit to perform his most menial offices. I indeed baptize you with water, but he shall give you a loftier baptism, "with the Holy Ghost and with fire." He expressly distinguishes Christ's baptism from his own; he characterizes it as something greater; nay, his language is pointedly significant of the fact that Christ's baptism is not of water, but of the spirit. Whether John be deemed capable of forming an infallible judgment in the case, is a point I shall not discuss. The mothers of John and of Jesus were cousins, and for some time abode together. Even if we suppose John to have been without the aid of supernatural grace, still he had the means of knowing much of Christ. Doubtless they often visited each other, and became acquainted with each other's character and purposes. John ingenuously owned the superiority of Christ, and fully testified to the greatness of his mission. He felt that Christ's baptism would as greatly excel his own, as the endowments of the Son of Mary were diviner than his. Let me refer to the striking language which he uses. "After me cometh a man which is preferred before me, . . . and I knew him not (i. e. as the Messiah); but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. But he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." John, it will be observed, takes extreme pains to distinguish Christ from himself, espe-

cially in this matter of baptism. He speaks of himself continually as a Water-Baptist, and sets Christ in contrast as a Spirit-Baptist. He signalizes Christ as "he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." He does not call him by name, but speaks of him as "a man," and then distinguishes him by the unique and exalted title of Baptizer with the Holy Ghost.

2. In the second place, I point to the example of Christ. He never practised water baptism. "Jesus himself baptized not," is the unqualified declaration of the Evangelist. Christ did not baptize John, but John baptized Christ, that is, with water. John *wished* Christ to baptize him, but he would not. To none of his disciples, to no one even of the twelve, nor to Martha or Mary, did Christ ever apply the baptism of water, either in the way of sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. He did, indeed, employ a kind of baptism, but what was it? A baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire, a baptism of the spirit, an effusion of spiritual influences, an immersion in Light and Love.

Again, in the interval between the resurrection and the ascension of our Lord, he addressed his disciples in this wise. Bidding them to wait for the promise of the Father, he adds, "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Here is the same distinction pointedly maintained between John's baptism and this other; between water-baptism and spirit-baptism. The occasion was Christ's last interview with his disciples; he was soon to leave them in this world for ever. He does not say, "Now let

me baptize you; you need to be sprinkled or immersed; I have never performed this rite on you; you are yet unbaptized." No. But he says, John indeed baptized with water, but you, *my own* disciples, look for a higher baptism; in a little while that higher baptism shall come. "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Could language convey in stronger terms the great idea that Christian baptism is with the Holy Ghost and not with water?

3. Again: I maintain the doctrine of this discourse from the language of St. Peter and the conduct of St. Paul. St. Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, says: "I thank God that I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius, and the household of Stephanas; besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel." Paul was the first teacher of Christianity in Corinth; he founded a church in that city; he made many believers; yet it appears he baptized no more than four or five; he asserts that baptizing was not a part of his commission; he avows not only an indifference to that rite, but even congratulates himself before God that he had not practised it, declaring that he has higher ends in view. Can we do otherwise than conclude, from this, that water-baptism was in Paul's mind of small account? Of St. Peter, we may say that he appears not to have entertained a perfect conception of Christ's spiritual baptism till after his remarkable vision mentioned in Acts x. In the account which Peter gives of this event he says, Moved by the

heavenly voice, I went to Cesarea, to the house of Cornelius the centurion, "and as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." It seems now for the first time to have dawned upon Peter, that the real baptism was of the spirit, a baptism of the soul rather than of the flesh. He begins to realize the full import of our Saviour's words.

4. In the fourth place, I would refer to a passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The writer exhorts us to leave certain things and go on unto perfection. These certain things are denominated in our version "principles of the doctrines of Christ," or, literally, "the word of the beginning," by which is intended the rudiments, the *a, b, c* of religious attainment. Among the things we are to leave is "the doctrine of baptisms." Whether this signifies what we now understand by sprinkling or immersion, it seems impossible perfectly to ascertain. Yet something of this sort I think is hinted at. If this be so, we are admonished to leave it (baptism) as an inferior good; to drop the subject, and go on to perfection, to something higher and better.

5. But, however this may be, manifestly *the general drift* of the Gospel is spiritual, and not material; it opposes the supremacy of form, and favors the inward life. "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." This is a cardinal maxim of Chris-

tianity, and is as applicable to baptism as to any thing else. What circumcision was under the old dispensation, baptism was liable to become under the new. In fact, it did proceed to occupy the same place. As, among the Jews, one could not be saved unless he were circumcised, so it came to be a received doctrine of the Church that one could not be saved unless he were baptized. Water-baptism has been counted regenerative, a grace-conferring ordinance, a specific antidote to the malady of a corrupt nature inherited from Adam. Such is the doctrine of the Romish Church, the Church of England, and some others. But the spirit of the Gospel is quite opposed to all such conclusions. As Paul lightly esteemed the rite of circumcision, so he never suffered baptism to occupy in his mind an important place as part of the Christian economy. "I thank God," he says, "I baptized none of you, save" — as many as he could count on the fingers of his hand.

6. I derive support to the doctrine of this discourse from the nature of things. It cannot be, I think, that the application of water to the body should have a saving efficacy on the soul. If the blood of the altar could not cleanse away sin, neither can water from the brook. Sin is of too fast a color to be washed out by such a process, and holiness is of too spiritual a nature to be generated by such appliances.

It is in the light of such considerations as I have now enumerated, that I interpret certain expressions of our Saviour. I refer to the commission he gave to his disciples, "Go, teach all nations, baptizing

them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"; — and to that other passage where he says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Did our Saviour, by these expressions, positively instruct his disciples to practise water-baptism, and condition salvation thereupon? Why, then, I ask, do we so soon find St. Paul thanking God that he had baptized none? But more; is such an idea consistent with other undoubted points of character and of conduct in our Saviour? Can it be supposed that he who broke through all forms would have made everlasting consequences to depend on a momentary and evanescent application of water? If water-baptism were essential, why did he never practise it? If he meant that his disciples should immerse or sprinkle all nations, why did he never immerse or sprinkle any? But what does Christ mean when he uses the word "baptism"? In every instance, so far as the present subject is concerned, where, from the circumstances of the case, his language is determinable, he speaks not of water-baptism, but of something very different. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." "With the baptism that I am baptized with, ye shall be baptized." "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." Surely, Christ's use of the word Baptism is obvious enough. And when he says to his disciples, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them (not in water, but) in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"; when he declares, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," —

it is spiritual baptism that he means. "I delegate you to carry this baptism over the world. Immerse mankind in the divine flood. Pour on them the waters of the heavenly Jordan."

Thus far we have been considering the meaning of Gospel baptism, or the baptism of which Christ speaks. We now approach the subject under another aspect, and we observe that while, in the great commission given by Christ to his disciples defining the nature of their future labors, the idea of spiritual baptism is mainly contemplated, still the Apostles and others, after the death of Christ, practised water-baptism. Of this there can be no question. While we are positively told that Christ did not practise it, and Paul but rarely, and while we feel assured that the great Gospel baptism is a baptism of the Holy Ghost, we have still something to say and somewhat to allow concerning water-baptism. Christ did not condemn it. He himself, in his own person, received it. Some of his immediate disciples resorted to it. It was very early adopted as a regulation of the Church. True, there is no positive command for water-baptism; true, also, that with the rite many things have been associated that disgust a liberal, and shock a rational mind; but, nevertheless, I think there is a solid and a reasonable basis for it, especially as applicable to our children.

I think I see a reason for the practice in its history; and yet, there are few customs or institutions the origin of which is so wrapped in obscurity as this. This much, however, appears, — that baptism, as a religious rite, has been observed in all times, and

among almost all nations. It existed before Christ; it was anterior to Moses. The ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans practised it, and it prevailed among the Mexicans and Peruvians. John the Baptist did not originate it, for it was in extensive use among the Jews prior to his day. Baptism, the sacred use of water, an external application to signify an inward purification, would seem to be one of the natural instincts of the human mind. It is in allusion to this universal custom, that John most pertinently says, "I indeed baptize you with water," but Jesus comes, who will baptize, cleanse, and purify your souls; he will scatter among the nations that divine truth which, as a flood of baptismal water, shall wash their sins away. It was in accordance with this universal custom, that, without any explicit declaration on the subject by Christ, it was universally introduced into the early Church, and has continued as a part of the ecclesiastical ceremonial to this day.

Baptism, or the ritual use of water, is the sign of purification. How then, it may be asked, does it apply to children, since it is not pretended among us that they are defiled, on the one hand, or cleansed by it on the other? Admitting its suitability for one of mature years, who has repented of his sins, or who seeks by resolution and effort for illumination and perfection, still, as children do not fulfil these conditions, what is its significance when applied to them? I answer, Baptism is not, indeed, a sign of the purification of children, who have never sinned; it is a sign of that purity *into which it is hoped children may grow*. It is a sign of that perpetual purity

which ought to reign over the heart and the conduct of childhood. We have a remote antiquity in favor of infant baptism, as well as its authority for much superstitious practice. As I have already said, water-baptism has been counted regenerative,—held to be a grace-conferring ordinance. Water applied in baptism was thought to purge the stains of the Fall and to insure salvation. In Scotland, a few years since, unbaptized children were supposed to wander in woods and solitudes, lamenting their hard fate, like the souls of unburied Greeks on the banks of the Styx. In the North of England it was deemed unlucky to go over the graves of the unbaptized. But all these things we wholly discard. It is as an act wherein parents consecrate their children to God and the Church, as a pledge wherein they resolve to train them up in the way of Christian obedience, as an earnest and foreshadowing of that ultimate and greater baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire, that infant baptism has its chief interest for us. Here, as I conceive, are the vital bearings of the subject. It is an ordinance whereby the important relations and duties of the Church are signified and recognized. *It is the seal of the covenant which the Church makes with its children.* It expresses the interest which the Church has for the little ones, and foretokens the protection it would extend over them, and the blessings it would bestow upon them.

The question is not, then, what good a sprinkling of water will do the children, or what harm will ensue if they be not baptized; it is rather the greater,

the more momentous question, What will the Church do in behalf of these new heirs of immortality, these raw empirics in human experience? It matters not how young a child may be, or how imbecile, or how unconscious; we take it, helpless, idealess, sleeping it may be in its mother's arms, and baptize it into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Such, I say, is what the Church proposes to do. Such, at least, is my idea of what the Church ought to do; such is the standard of obligation it should erect for itself. It, thus, would enter into covenant with the children; it would cast its wise restraints about them; it would shield them with its most maternal love; it would guide them to their eternal rest. The Church has many things to deal with, many concerns to look after, but the gravest of its cares is the welfare of its children.

It is quite as well, nay, it is far better, that one should be young when he is baptized. Very young children do not understand the Sabbath, its nature or its uses, and yet we rejoice to have them feel its sanctity, and be subdued by its repose. So in respect of many things we do for them, or by which we would affect them, they are unconscious of the significance or the motive of our conduct. Whatever is done systematically and permanently for children usually takes its start below their consciousness, and gradually rises to it. As I would have a person young when he begins to acquire knowledge, or when he commences a course of virtue, so I would have him young when he is baptized; that is, I would not have a child continue in ignorance, nor

addict himself to vice, before in these respects counteracting influences should be gathered about him; nor would I have him live in sin, no, not for an hour, before he should be surrounded by the salutary forces of religion and brought within the jurisdiction and wardenship of the Church.

What in this matter have we cause to deplore? This: that the mind and heart and strength of the Church have been engrossed with an outward, material ceremony, whereon Scripture delivers itself somewhat ambiguously; while there has been a sad forgetting and neglect of the inward, spiritual ceremony, whereon the letter of Scripture is so precise and authoritative. "I indeed baptize you with water," — we read so far and stop. We crowd about John, as if he had uttered words on which hung the doom of the universe; we ask who, what, where, when, how? "Shall little children be baptized?" "No," cries one party, "it is ludicrous, it is absurd." "At what age, then?" "With how much water?" "By dripping or by dipping?" The whole Christian world is convulsed. But what says John? I baptize with water, indeed; let it pass for what it is worth; but he, my superior, he into whose shadow I so soon shall fall, he, your Saviour and Redeemer, shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. But in spite of this, we follow the waning disc of the decreasing John, hunting for the pools of Enon, prying along the reedy banks of Jordan, anxious, prayerful, seeking for depth of water wherein to lay our bodies. Christ, the increasing, the dilating one, who mounts upward, beckoning us on, who would bap-

tize us in the sun, who would pour on us floods of empyrean light, him we forsake and despise!

But there is a spiritual baptism, to which we ought to aspire. "Baptized *into* Christ." "Baptized *with* the Holy Ghost." This is peculiar language. The formula, "baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," means not merely, christening or taking upon one's self the Christian name; it signifies this higher baptism. We are baptized into God, as we are into Christ. Not merely is the name of God a portion of the formula, the Spirit of God is the transfusing element. In true baptism, the font is not hewn out of marble or fabricated of silver. Our baptistery is the universe; the baptismal flood is God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit. We are plunged in the mighty influences of truth. It is a fiery baptism, — one that melts and refines us; one that sheds warmth and vivacity through our souls; one that disperses the darkness of the mind, and gives rest and peace to our natures. In that gorgeous lustre and radiance which burns on cloud-tops, and streams along the sky at sunset, I baptize my soul. In that diviner light, in the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, in the very brightness of the Father's glory, I baptize my soul. Daily as the sun baptizes the earth with light, yearly as it baptizes it with verdure, so ought we to be baptized with the beauty of the Son of God. Whatever we may think about water-baptism, let us not forget the baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire. Let us continually strive for the baptism of Christ, even as Paul did for his resurrection.

SERMON II.



GOSPEL CONVERSION.

CAST YE UP, CAST YE UP, PREPARE THE WAY, TAKE UP THE STUMBLING-BLOCK OUT OF THE WAY OF MY PEOPLE. — Isaiah lvii. 14.

THERE are many stumbling-blocks in the way of duty. As the true idea of the soul, of Christianity and the Church, begins to unfold, these stumbling-blocks are developed more and more. One hinderance to doing what we ought to do for the sacred interests to which we all are nominally committed, lies in that frequent phrase, "I am not a professor." There is still another, which lurks in the feeling or notion that one has not been converted. There are multitudes who will not do any thing for God or the Church, on the ground that they have not been converted. Let us examine what this ground is, how good it is, how substantial.

Those who occupy it are not bad men, vile, corrupt, impious. I take it, all who plead this excuse would repel such an imputation. The simple idea at the bottom is, "I have not been converted." What is this being converted? What is the force

of this idea? How far does not being converted, in the sense attached to that word, furnish a reasonable disqualification for duties that lie before us? Is not the logic of the phrase chargeable with incoherency? If a man who has neglected duty hitherto, now performs it, is he not a converted man? Is there any sense in saying you will do your duty after you are converted? Are you not converted in the very act of undertaking to do your duty, or in passing from a state of indifference to one of interest?

What is the meaning of the word "conversion"? It is turning, or turning round. It is the Latin form of the Saxon expression *to turn*. It signifies to turn from one state or condition or mode to another. The corresponding Greek word means this, and no more. The original word in the New Testament is translated, indiscriminately, *to turn*, and *to be converted*. In the expression, "the dog is turned to his vomit again," precisely the same word is used (*ἐπιστρέφω, στρέφω*) as where it is said, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," or "Let your laughter be turned (be converted) to mourning." In this passage, "Jesus *turned him about* in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?" the same word is used as where we read, "He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death." Our Lord turned, was converted, and looked upon Peter. Throughout them all, the word is the same. Paul asks, "How *turn ye again* to the weak and beggarly elements?" how are ye converted? And from this it appears we may, in Bible language, be converted or turned from good to evil, as well as

from evil to good. Not only is the whole man spoken of, in the New Testament, as turning, or being converted, but parts of a man are thus spoken of. Paul speaks of some who turn away, convert, their ears from the truth. Some in their hearts turned back again, were converted, unto Egypt. Again, we read that Mary turned herself back and saw Jesus, converted herself. Jesus *turned himself* about, was converted. "If the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it. If it be not worthy, let it *return* to you again." Here we get a very precise idea of the word. So the unclean spirit is represented as saying, "I will *return* into my house whence I came out." "Neither let him which is in the field *return back* to take his clothes." "And the shepherds *returned*, glorifying God." "Ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned [converted] unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

Again, this verb is almost always active in the original, where it is passive in the translation. This people have closed their eyes, "lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and should be converted" (*ἐπιστρέψωσι*), literally, should turn, or return, "and I should heal them." "If thy brother trespass against thee seven times a day, and seven times a day *turn again to thee* [be converted to thee], thou shalt forgive him." "Repent ye, therefore, and *be converted*," return, turn, or convert yourselves. Indeed, I do not recall an instance where the verb in the original has the passive form. But the translation sometimes gives the word in the active sense of the original. Thus: "Many of the children of Israel shall he

[John] *turn* [convert] to the Lord their God, and he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias *to turn* [convert] the hearts of the fathers to the children," &c. "And all that dwelt in Lydda saw Eneas, whom Peter had healed, and *turned* unto the Lord." "And a great number believed, and *turned* unto the Lord." Paul says: "We are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should *turn* [be converted] from these vanities unto the living God." It is possible, according to the word of God, for one man to convert another. The commission to Paul was in these words: "I send thee to open the eyes of the people, and *to turn* [convert] them from darkness to light." "Brethren," says St. James, "if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

This is the way the matter stands in the Bible. And now, in the light of divine truth, I ask again, What is the meaning of the pretence that a man cannot do his duty to God, to his own soul, and the Church, until he is converted? Men are sometimes likened to sheep going astray. What language shall we use to them? What shall they reply to us? Suppose we say, "You ought to be in the fold, you ought to go back to your Shepherd," shall they reply, "We know it, but we cannot do so until we are converted"? What is going back but conversion? Suppose we say, "Instead of continuing to go on in this way, you ought to turn back and go home." If they,

owing to some deep, inveterate prejudice, fail to perceive the equivoque in the words, "We cannot turn back until we are converted," we should have to explain to them that these two ideas are identical. As the Apostle says, "Ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned [converted] unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

The allusion, the import, and application of the language in the Bible are exceedingly simple. You are turned from an object, you turn towards it and are converted; as Christ turned (literally, converted himself), and looked towards Peter. You are going a wrong way, you turn and go a right way; you are converted; as the sinner is converted who is turned from the error of his way. You have neglected your affairs, you now attend to them; you are converted. You have been indifferent to truth, you become interested in it; you are converted.

Summarily, conversion, according to Bible language, is doing the very thing which you say you must be converted before you can do. Conversion does not lie anywhere between a man and his duty. Whoever faithfully fulfils his duty, having once neglected it, is a converted man. "Conversion" does not express what a man is, or what happens to him, but what he does. Invariably, I believe, it is referred to by the sacred writers in an active sense.

Suppose now, to begin at the very quick of religion, you do not love God, your heart is estranged, you are carnally-minded, you are the servant of sin; how does the Bible and common sense address you in such a case? It urges you to love God; it ad-

monishes you of your serious duty. Do you say, you would love God, and be a disciple of Christ, if you were only converted? The very act of loving God, the very first recognition of Jesus as your Lord and Master, is conversion; it is the essence and fulfilment of that very thing. If you do not love God, and presently begin to love him, that is conversion, it is turning your heart to him; it is obedience to the exhortation, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" If you have been sceptical, faithless, heartless, cold, in regard to Christ and the Church, and henceforth become a believer, a lover, and a doer in these regards, that again is conversion, you become a convert. Multitudes think or feel that they cannot pray, or it is no duty of theirs to pray, or it is not expected of them to pray, till they have been converted. The fact is, if you have hitherto neglected prayer, turned your back upon it, and now turn round, if you now begin to pray, you thereby become converted.

There is no mystery in conversion, so far as the Gospel is concerned. It is a matter of common sense, of every-day life, of familiar experience. Christ and the Apostles employ the word in all manner of connections, and for all sorts of purposes, and with the utmost freedom. It is, as you see, a common word in the Bible, just as much so as turning, or going, or looking, or moving. There is no theological, occult, polemic word CONVERSION in the Bible. It is used indiscriminately of one who turns from duty, and of one who turns to it. It has just as many uses as the word TURN has, physical, moral, secular, religious. There is just this differ-

ence; the verb "to turn" is active-transitive and active-intransitive, as when we say, "a man turns to go home," or "a man turns a wheel"; whereas the verb "convert" is used only in an active-transitive sense, as thus: "a man converts ice into water." We do not say, a drunkard converts to temperance, but are obliged to employ the passive form of the verb, and say, a drunkard is converted to temperance. But the Greek verb, ἐπιστρέφω, is employed, just like our verb *to turn*, in an active-transitive and in an active-intransitive sense. Yet in rendering this word "convert" instead of "turn," the translators resorted to a less flexible word, and one that without an object must always be used in the passive voice. So they represent Peter as saying, "Repent and *be* converted," and Christ as saying, "Except ye *be* converted," while in reality the former says, "Repent and return," and Christ says, "Except ye return."

Out of this grammatical peculiarity has the mistake, in part, arisen, under which the subject labors; and this contributes likewise to uphold the dogmatic error that man is passive in conversion. It is preached everywhere, in elaborate churches, in vestry-rooms, in school-houses, in camp-meetings, that men must *be* converted. I affirm that that is not what the Bible teaches. The language and doctrine of the Bible are, that man must return, or turn about. On this difference of phraseology depend most singular results. The two words have very different meanings, and theologically speaking this difference is of a rather formidable nature. What is sin? What is man? What is religion? What is to be

looked for in the matter of salvation? These and similar questions are involved in this discussion of a word. Is sin, as the English Church maintains, the corruption of our nature, naturally engendered from Adam? Or is it, as the Bible says, a transgression of the Divine law? If the former, then conversion is a passive state, a supernatural effect; a man *is* converted, he does not return. If the latter, then conversion consists in obedience to the law, it is ceasing to do evil and learning to do well. Is sin an act, or is it a mode of our natures? Is it voluntary or involuntary? Is man as a sinner responsible or irresponsible? Does a man sin in Adam, or in himself? We do not hesitate on these questions, we have no doubts whatever on the subject. God has revealed the truth to his own Church. Most strikingly, most wonderfully, most providentially I might say, does the examination of Scripture serve to confirm all the fundamental views of the Church. The deeper we pursue the inquiry, the more light from the great central luminary is derived to our foregone conclusions. The moment we leave the pathway of creeds and formulas of human device, and come where God himself speaks to the children of men, then do we discover what the essential truth is.

No; conversion is a returning, mark the word, *a returning*, a going back to something we have left, a recovery of an old position, a resumption of what we have neglected. Jesus says, "Except ye be converted," — that is, except ye return, turn about, go back, — "and become as little children, ye cannot see the kingdom of God." The child's nature is not corrupt,

it is not a vicious condition of being engendered of Adam; it is pure; it is free, I mean, from the stain of sin; and we must *return* to that simplicity and innocence, that our souls may be saved. This is what Christ teaches. This is what we believe. This is the doctrine of the Church.

Conversion, then, in its highest sense, is the returning of the soul to its God, of the child to its Father in heaven, of the wanderer to his home. Repent and be converted; repent and return. By repentance and humiliation, every sinner can and must return to his God.

All this, you say, is obvious and satisfactory. What is the difficulty? This is it; that, as regards many of us, the effect of our early education cleaves to us, the errors with which the very atmosphere round about is saturated influence us, the popular prejudices on the subject are imbibed by us, and when a man is spoken to about his duty to God, his own soul, and the Church, instantly a feeling arises which says, "Why, I have never been converted!" or, "If I had been converted, you might expect such and such things of me." The effect is like poison taken into the system, and a long time will be necessary to purge it away. This prejudice, or sentiment, whatever it be called, is sometimes hallowed by the memory of parents who believed very differently from what we can believe; it is associated, perhaps, with some of the tenderest and most solemn recollections of our life. Sometimes, when it has been hammered into us by some powerful sermon we may have heard, it has become like a goad fastened by the

master of assemblies. Our nerves, or our strength, are not sufficient to rise to the simple Gospel point of elevation, where we can see that conversion is doing the will of God.

There is another matter in this connection which occasions difficulty,— a dread of what the world will say. If one of you should undertake a religious duty, the question would be asked, “When was he converted?” Or perhaps the whisper would go round, “I never heard he had met with a change!” Or, “Do they allow unconverted people to engage in religious duties?” The fear of man bringeth a snare, and the dread which I speak of fetters many a foot, and smothers many an utterance.

Again, there are those who contrive to comfort themselves with the idea, that, as they never have been converted, nothing is expected of them, and who hope to live along without reproach from others or remorse in their own souls. While you really believe one thing, you practise another. Your rational, sober belief is, that conversion is doing your duty; your practice proceeds on the principle, that you cannot do your duty until you are converted. This idea of conversion that is so prevalent, that is even lodged in your own feelings, is not a Gospel idea, but a Calvinistic figment. And let me say, you never can be Calvinistically converted, for the reason that you do not believe in Calvinism. You practise Calvinism every day; I mean, you proceed on the idea that nothing in a religious way is to be expected of you until you have been converted. But that sort of conversion the men and women here to-day will

never reach, go where you will, and hear whatever preaching you may, for the reason that in your own minds you do not, and never can be made to accept the dogma on which it rests. No, you will go on just as you are now going, through life, from this to your dying day, with the light of evangelical truth shining full upon you, but with your feet at the same time cumbered with the miry clay of error and prejudice, unless by some immediate, vigorous, and as it were, revolutionary decision, you break the spell that binds you.

I remark, as regards multitudes of young men and women, and older men and women, in the sects about us, and all over the State, that they are waiting for this supernatural conversion; they are waiting for it, they are doing nothing themselves, they have no enjoyment of God, they have no assurance of hope, they enter upon no religious duties, they accept no responsibilities as immortal beings. Religiously speaking, they are wasting, dissipating, losing the best portion of their lives, and all because the time of their fancied conversion has not yet arrived. Some of them live in sin, commit all sorts of vice, under the vain notion that this something called conversion, in a revival or at some other juncture, will supervene, and then they will not want to sin, then they will come into the Church, leave off bad habits, and enjoy a pure life.

Such a conversion as they dream of may possibly happen to them; but, as I have had occasion to remark, the instances are becoming fewer and fewer all through the country. And what, ere long, must the

issue be? That there will be no religion at all? Assuredly Calvinism is losing its force upon the public mind; certainly Calvinistic conversions are diminishing. When there shall be no such conversions, what then? What, I ask, will become of our young men and women, and our older men and women?

My reply is, that the platform of the simple Gospel is broad enough to receive them all, and strong enough to hold them all. They will yet find, as I hope and pray, that being converted, in the Gospel sense, is radically and simply *a turning unto God*. The Church, the true Church, the Church that has the seven golden candlesticks blazing with light, must develop itself, extend itself, lengthen its cords, and strengthen its stakes, that it may receive into its bosom and enfold the multitudes of the bewrayed, the estray, the forlorn and lost, who may flee from error, cant, and formality, and desire a shelter.

The two notions of the innate corruption of human nature and of miraculous conversion are actually consuming the religion of New England; I mean, they are filling our cities and towns, our churches and families, with those who believe they have nothing to do with religion or the Church except in that mysterious contingency to which I have adverted. God gives it to us, my friends, — reverently and without presumption, yet positively, I say it, — God gives it to us to rescue and preserve the religion of our country. The Church, God's own Church, that which is the pillar and stay of the truth, that which invokes reason and common sense, (without

which religion cannot stand up long anywhere,) which allies itself to humanity and cleaves to the simple word of God, — in a word, the true Church is our refuge and our hope.

My friends, let us listen to the message God addresses to us. “Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people.” The stumbling-blocks in the way of truth are obviously such as error puts there; the stumbling-blocks in the way of our individual progress in truth are such as a false education has placed in our way. One of these obstacles is that which I have now commented upon, that one cannot do his duty until he is converted. Let us, my friends, remove it out of the way. “Not being converted” really exempts you from no duty, discharges you from no obligation, gives you quittance from no commandment; no, not for an hour. If you are a sinner before God, your duty is to leave off your sins and turn to or be converted unto God. If you do not pray, your duty is to pray. No plea of non-conversion can excuse you for an instant. If your child runs into the street, and you send for him to come back, does it content you that he replies, “When I am converted, I will go back”? You send him to school, and he plays truant, and wanders down to the river. When one speaks to him, and urges him to return to school, shall he take refuge in the same preposterous reply? And yet that reply is no whit less absurd in respect of religious duties than it is in the cases just supposed.

Nor do we misconceive conversion, we understand

it; nor do we pervert its meaning, we elucidate it; or rather, by applying ourselves to the simple word of God, we discover and learn what it is. This explains what I have elsewhere said about Unitarianism being the true interpreter of the Bible. It gets just as near to the mind of Christ as it is possible to do. It goes to the original media of expression; it compares passage with passage; it follows a given word from book to book. Having heard Christ use a phrase once, it stays near him and waits until he uses it again, and then it betakes itself to Paul, to be sure of the sense; and thus, simply, humbly loving the truth, it is impossible that it should not know the truth.

My friends, to use no harsher epithet, it is *a shame* that rational, immortal beings, men and women with religious natures, a religious sense, religious needs, should be embarrassed in the discharge of their duties, hindered from the accomplishment of their destiny, spoiled of their highest happiness, by these pitiful pretexts. Let us feel, let each man, woman, and child feel, that we have something to do for God, our own souls, and the Church. Let us be ready to do that something to-day, or any day, as opportunity offers, or call upon us shall be made. Let us remember that conversion consists in doing our duty; that we are being converted just as far and as fast as we do our duty; that there is no conversion, and never can be a genuine conversion, while a man neglects to do his duty.

SERMON III.



CHRISTIAN OBLIGATIONS UNIVERSAL.

FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AS A MAN TRAVELLING INTO A FAR COUNTRY, WHO CALLED HIS OWN SERVANTS, AND DELIVERED UNTO THEM HIS GOODS. AND UNTO ONE HE GAVE FIVE TALENTS, TO ANOTHER TWO, AND TO ANOTHER ONE; TO EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS SEVERAL ABILITY; AND STRAIGHTWAY TOOK HIS JOURNEY. — Matt. xxv. 14, 15.

I MIGHT refer for my text to the entire passage which I read to you this morning. In it are contained the thoughts on which I propose to dwell, and the doctrine I would inculcate.

In the parable it is stated that the servants were held responsible, each according to his ability. The word "talent," which in the original means a sum of money, may be considered, in its spiritual application, to denote in general terms our duties; and it is a principle at once of Christ and of common sense, that duty devolves to every man according to his ability. It is sometimes common to regard talents in the light of powers, gifts, endowments; that is, means of performing our duty. But this seems to confound them a little with the ability or capacity according to which they are distributed. Perhaps both ideas are to some extent involved; and the

term may stand for faculties to be improved, as well as duties to be fulfilled. The language of the text is, "The Lord called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods; and he gave to every man according to his several ability." The ability was the basis, the measure of the trust. The ability in each case determined the ratio of his bounty; the bounty was not arbitrarily bestowed, and then regarded as a criterion of ability. No man is accountable for what he cannot do. No man is accountable beyond the strict limit of his ability. The doctrine of the passage is, to be a little more specific, that every man is responsible to God and to his own soul; that religious, moral, and other duties devolve to every man, according to his several ability.

The passage reads, "*The kingdom of heaven is as a man,*" &c. These words in italics are not in the original, but are supplied. Better, perhaps, say, *The Son of Man is as a man travelling into a far country,* &c. This would be more appropriate, I think. Christ, so to say, has gone on a journey. He leaves his goods, his effects, his interests, his schemes and purposes, in the hands of his servants. He delivers to us duties, work, commands, according to our several ability; to one ten talents, to another five, to another one; to all, something. If we are right in supposing that the parable refers to men generally, our statement broadens into this, that Christian duties devolve to every man, according to his ability. Let us look at this determining test, the hinge on which our duty is made to turn, this ability.

Ability may be considered as made up of three

parts, or resolvable into three elements, intelligence, capacity, and opportunity. Perhaps more things may enter into its composition, but these three are certain and enough. There must be intelligence, or the knowledge of what duty is; capacity, or the power of performing it; and opportunity, or the occasion and call for it. If one have these three in combination, he would seem to be sufficiently furnished unto all good works, unto all that God or man can demand of him. Our formula, then, may be thus expressed: man is responsible according to his intelligence, capacity, and opportunity. Considered as moral and religious beings, our moral and religious duties are as our intelligence, capacity, and opportunity; as under the Christian dispensation, our Christian obligations are in the same ratio.

Reflect on what is here involved. Our responsibility and duties before God are not proportioned according to any arbitrary judgment of our fellow-men, or any conventional standards of society. They do not devolve to wealth alone; the poor man has high obligations as well as the rich. They are not laid upon mental force alone; the man of mediocre mind is equally accountable with the man of gigantic intellect. Only some have ten talents to deal with, and others but one. Again, our duties are not determined merely by the intelligence we possess, but also by our capacity. Nor are these alone to be considered; thereto must be added opportunity. A man may clearly see that certain things ought to be done, and yet have no power to do them. Or, the understanding and the power may entirely fail of results, by reason of a want of occasion or call.

Especially I would observe, that our moral and religious accountableness is not graduated by *profession*. The Lord, in the parable, divided what may be called his capital among his servants, not according to the professions any of them made, but unto every man according to his several ability. So are we all accountable before God. So are moral and religious duties, so are Christian obligations apportioned amongst us, to every man, woman, and child, according to our several ability. Such I understand to be, such I insist is, the rule of Christianity and of common sense. Let us apply it, — apply it to ourselves and to the community about us.

A difficulty appears at once. The general sentiment and practice have transferred and confined the obligation of religious duties to a limited portion of the population. In other words, the world about us is divided into two classes, one of which assumes, while the other deems itself exempt from, the highest duties of human existence. The former is a small company, the latter comprises the great body of our citizens. Herein is a singular condition of things. Let us examine it for a moment. That which characterizes these two classes is, for the most part, what is popularly known as *profession* of religion and *non-profession*. Or, the first are technically church-members, and the last are non-church-members. The sentiment or notion to which I refer is, that the highest human obligations before God, religious duties, Christian accountability, devolve solely to the comparatively small fraction of the community called *professors* of religion. I observe,

moreover, that this is an ecclesiastical novelty, a notion somewhat peculiar to New England. The origin of it is to be found in the dogma that all men, by nature, are totally depraved, but that in a few men this depravity is in some supernatural way cured. Hence the people of any given locality become separated into two classes, the naturally irreligious and the supernaturally regenerate. Those whose innate depravity has been cured make a *profession* of the fact, or of their hope of the fact; thence the distinction of professors and non-professors. Thus sprung up this sweeping characterization of the human race. In its peculiar features, and such as we ourselves have been familiar with, the system is about a century old. It is sometimes said to be of no consequence what a man's speculative notions are. But this purely *metaphysical abstraction* of total depravity lies at the very bottom of the sentiment and usage to which I have adverted.

You all know how the case stands. Go back in memory to the village where you were brought up. There were the professors and the non-professors; in other words, "the Church," so called, and the world. The professors were supposed to be in the sight of God the good people, and the others the bad. The professors had hopes, the others had none. Call to mind the universal, deep-seated, positive popular expectation and feeling that these professors alone should partake of the Lord's Supper, that they alone should have their children baptized, that they only should pray in their families and in private, that they should attend and generally speak and pray

in religious meetings, that if any one would study for the ministry, or go forth as a missionary, or become a deacon, or undertake any religious office, he must be a professor; and, negatively, that these men must not use profane language or dance. Nay, more. Was it not in your younger days, is it not now everywhere hereabout, the expectation, feeling, sentiment, deep and irresistible, that those others, the non-professors, would not partake of the Sacrament, or have their children baptized, or pray in their families or in an evening meeting; that no one of them would for a moment think of filling the office of a deacon, or of studying for the ministry, or of embarking on missionary labors? I do not mean that a non-professor was positively enjoined not to pray, but would it not have been thought passing strange if the mass of the people, the non-professors in your native town, had adopted regular habits of family prayer? But as for certain kinds of recreation, you know these were, for the most part, absolutely interdicted to professors, or at least were regarded as matters of reproach and discipline when indulged in by professors, while for a non-professor to practise them was thought nothing of.

Will it be said that this distinction of professor and non-professor implied a real difference in character, in heart and life; that the first was truly a saint and the last a notable sinner, the first really a good man and the last really a bad man? Is that the fact? Are New England professors of religion the really good men of New England, and are non-professors the really bad men? I am aware that

here I come close upon a disputed dogmatical question, and I grant that a fancied real distinction has something to do with this outward nominal distinction. But go into any community where this ecclesiastical classification prevails, and will you hear any one saying, "Why! Mr. —— is *a good man*, and therefore I wonder he does not attend the prayer-meeting!" Is not the wonder and the reproach more often this, — "*He is a professor*, and therefore he ought to attend the prayer-meeting"? This distinction, the basis of this expectancy, is not that some men are really good, and therefore should do thus and so, and the rest are really bad, and therefore it is of no consequence what they do; it is simply profession and non-profession. The mere fact that a man is a professor, not that he is really a good man, determines at once the popular expectation in regard to him. So, I say, speculative theology, here in New England and elsewhere, divides the human race.

Consider now the operation of such a division on the exterior and interior religion of New England. These professors, or converted men, as they were reputed to be, were supposed to have joys and hopes that others had not. They were addressed from the pulpit differently from others. They were deemed to be God's elect, and called God's people. When they died, it was presumed they went to heaven. All outward religious duties and privileges devolved to them, such as prayer, communion, baptism, &c. They constituted the Church. Presently they began to assert some special rights. They claimed the exclusive right to choose and settle the

minister. But the others, the non-professors, had to help pay the minister's salary. Hence a dispute arose between them. The professors, commonly called the Church, yielded so far as to say, "We will nominate the minister, and you may have a voice in his election." In the case of Brattle Street Church, Boston, now Unitarian, the non-professors went to the point of insisting that, as they were equally interested in the minister with the rest, they would not only vote in his election, but they would have an equal voice also in his nomination. And it has since come to pass in all the Liberal churches of New England, that professors and non-professors unite in the choice and settlement, as well as the maintenance, of the minister. This ecclesiastical distinction was one of the causes of the rise and development of denominational Liberal churches in New England.

After Whitefield's time, professors began to tighten the reins, and to insist more strenuously than ever on their prerogatives. It was asked by them, — and on the common Calvinistic ground there was much pertinence in the question, — Why should sinners, unconverted, depraved, and vicious men, be allowed to choose a minister? How could they undertake to determine who should dispense God's message? And gradually the non-professors began more and more to be excluded from all voice and influence in church affairs. In some instances in Massachusetts, as members of the parish they actually outvoted the professors and bore them down; but in other cases the professors got the upperhand and drove

off the non-professors. The upshot of the matter was the fixed establishment of distinctively Liberal churches. Several of the older Massachusetts Unitarian churches sprung directly out of this oppug-nance between professors and non-professors. In some cases the non-professors withdrew and formed congregations, settled pastors, and sustained Christian ordinances of their own. I am aware that what is called the ecclesiastical history of New England does not state the case just as I have stated it, but such, nevertheless, is the actual truth.

I pass to the more impressive fact already intimated, that the entire catalogue of vital and practical religious duties was lifted wholly from one class, and left resting wholly upon the other; the thing was as palpably, as clearly done, as if I were to take this Bible from one side of the desk, and lay it over on the other. Nobody was expected to pray, to be in the habit of prayer, except professors, or the so-called Church. I do not say that all others were forbidden to pray, but nobody else was expected to pray. I am certain of this, that not only was no one expected, but no one was allowed, to partake of the communion, except professors. It was so in respect to manifold other duties. The great majority of people virtually relapsed from all sense of their Christian and religious obligations.

Now, what is presented in all this but a direct impugment, rejection, and overthrow of that cardinal principle of Christ, and of common sense, that Christian and religious duties are imposed and rest upon all men, according to their several ability? I

know of nothing in any country or age, under any form of religion, Heathen, Jewish, Mohammedan, or Christian, like this, which, in its most striking development, we behold round about us, — that the personal, private, peculiar obligations of religion are thought to pertain to only an insignificant fraction of a given community. The public ministrations of religion, possibly, may be in some cases more select, and ecclesiastical functions more sparingly bestowed, but not the personal and familiar duties of religion.

According to this order of things we have all been educated ; in it we have received our nurture and admonition ; it is a part of our personal history ; it is cradled among our instincts and sentiments ; the great majority of even this congregation are at this moment under the almost despotic control of this marvellous hallucination. Yet nature struggles against it, — our riper reason is against it, — all laws of human association and the general law of human happiness are against this anomalous, monstrous divorce between professors and non-professors. Understand me, my friends ; I say nothing against the propriety or advantages, or even duty, of making a formal avowal of religious faith. That may be well. I am only undertaking now to exhibit the lamentable fact, that, while all the highest obligations before God, all religious and Christian duties, devolve to every man, professor or non-professor, according to his ability, yet here in this community all such duties are distributed according to profession. It may be one of our duties to make such

a profession, but even that duty is to be discharged according to every man's ability. It was not enough that mankind had been voted depraved and naturally averse from religion, but the clergy, the divines, the learned theologians, have deliberately taken from them a sense of the obligations of a religious life.

But many things, I say, are against this divorce, and tend to promote a reunion. A hundred years ago, professors tried to keep aloof from non-professors in the matter of choosing their ministers; but in many churches they came together, and I believe there is not now a church in this State that would venture upon calling or settling a minister without free and full consultation with what it pleases to call the world. So in forming a parish, erecting a meeting-house, providing for support of ministers, there is at this day no recognized distinction between the two classes. Converted and unconverted men are seen wending their way to the house of God in company. When it is desirable to sell pews, I believe the money of an impenitent sinner is as readily accepted, if not as highly esteemed, as that of a regenerate man. In the matter of Sunday schools, although it is generally desirable, yet it is not always the case, that the Superintendent is a professor. In respect to the teachers, I believe they will be usually found to consist of both classes, and as for the scholars there are rarely any professors among them. In missionary movements, so far as its pecuniary basis and general home management are concerned, no discrimination is made. Non-professors attend the monthly concerts of prayer, the names of non-profes-

sors may be found in the lists of members and subscribers. In rural gatherings, Sunday-school celebrations, parish meetings, the Church and the world meet on equal footing. It is no uncommon event for a professor to marry one who is not, and clergymen are nothing loth to sanction this vital, indissoluble compact between parties, one of whom they, theoretically, believe to be wholly corrupt, a child of the Devil, and the other they presume to have met with a change, and to be a child of God. I may observe that the family to a very considerable extent serves to confound and annihilate this ecclesiastical distinction, inasmuch as under the same roof, around the same table, and in all that belongs to home, and its sacredness, depth, and beauty, professors and non-professors are everywhere mingled in together. In raising funds for the endowment of theological schools, no such distinction is kept up. In all that pertains to the personal comfort or necessities of the minister and his household, men of both classes promiscuously are seen to engage.

What I have mentioned are some of the religious relations in which the Church and the world of any given parish are found to unite. I need not say how in benevolent and philanthropic enterprises they are mutual helpers and co-workers; in efforts for relieving the poor, in the temperance reform, in behalf of peace and universal emancipation, they all move together. But it is of what belongs peculiarly to religion that I would chiefly speak. And I observe there is an increasing tendency to a reunion between professors and non-professors. Is there any harm in

this? Does the Church lose any thing thereby? Is sound piety endangered? Is the Church coming down to the world, or the world rising up to the Church?

In the opening of this discourse I stated what Christ had laid down for us, as the great law of human obligation, in respect of what is highest and holiest; that in every man duty is proportioned to ability. I have taken an historical review of a portion of Christendom, and shown how this law has been set at naught, and how it has been attempted to segregate a class of men on whom peculiarly and solely these obligations should rest. I have said how, in process of time and in the providence of God, even these inveterate distinctions begin to give way, and that all classes are found coalescing more and more in certain religious relations. I am now prepared to make a seasonable, and I trust an effective, application of the doctrine of the text.

I see, my friends, how you are situated. I know how most of you have been educated. I can allow for all the subtle influences that are biasing at once your nature and your reason. I have spoken of certain things, perhaps some will deem them among the lesser and unessential things, in which the world actually does unite with the Church. Shall we stop there? Shall we carry the healing process no further? It may be God will carry it further in spite of us. A few years since, when professors, as I have said, would not permit non-professors to have a voice in the choice of a minister, those very non-professors drew off and built a meeting-house and settled a

minister for themselves. It may yet happen that non-professors will withdraw and set up a communion-table likewise. But that is not exactly the point I am concerned about, as I fear it is a result of which there is little hope. The danger is rather in an opposite direction. While indeed many things indicate that non-professors are awakening to some sense of their duty and privileges, I fear they will stop far short of their whole duty.

But ought there not to be distinction between professors and those who are not, between church-members, so called, and the world, so called? I am not now discussing that question, nor am I obliged to notice it, except to observe that this is not a happy way of propounding the true question. Our modern notions of the Church and church-membership are wholly foreign to the New Testament. But as to the practical effect of the distinction, it was well tested some years ago in the matter of settling ministers; let those renew the experiment who will. Refuse to give a man a voice in the choice of his pastor, and then go to him with the subscription-paper. Nay, to be consistent, having refused his vote, refuse also his subscription, and finish up, consummate the desired distinction, by shutting him out of the meeting-house altogether. Let not the unconverted appear in the assembly at all! Thus the separation of the Church and the world would be complete; then it would be seen at a glance, who were Christians and who were not. But see how this distinction has actually disappeared in the Sunday school. There you will find unconverted per-

sons, non-professors, the world, teaching the Bible to the children, some of whom, it may be, are themselves church-members.

There is the duty of prayer. Respecting this there may be a diversity of gifts. All persons cannot lead in miscellaneous social devotion. In this, as in many other cases, some have ten talents, some five, others only one; but to each man is the talent or duty allotted, according to his ability. Take, now, a case like this. A non-professor gives money to the missionary cause; at the monthly concert, prayer is put up in its behalf; it is customary to pray for success to the end and for a blessing on the means. Now is it not absurd to imagine that a man may give money for a religious object, and yet have no power to pray for a blessing on what he does; absurd to suppose that God will accept a man's pecuniary offering and not his prayers? I lay it down as a rule, which I think no reasonable man will wish, and no bigot dare, to dispute, that whenever and for whatsoever a non-professor, a technically unconverted man, may bestow pecuniary aid, then, and for just that, he not only may pray, but he is bound to pray. And as to speaking in social religious meetings, the same law applies. It is not the peculiar duty of professors of religion to do this; it is every man's duty, in proportion to his intelligence, capacity, and opportunity.

Then as to miscellaneous Christian duties: to let our light shine, to overcome evil with good, to love God and our neighbor, to be renewed in the spirit of our mind, to put away lying, to be humble and submissive, to edify one another, to repent of sin,—

these, and more that I might name, all belong to every man of us, according to our ability. They belong to no set of men, but are equally imperative on every man in Christendom, who has intelligence, capacity, and opportunity therefor. The text, to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, ordinarily preached to professors, is as applicable to one man in a Christian land as to another. We are all called of God and to God. We are called to virtue, to holiness, to Christ; and we are every one of us bound to honor our vocation according to our several ability.

There is the duty of the baptism of children; where in the Bible is it said the children of *professors* shall be baptized? If it is one parent's duty to have his children baptized, it is the duty of every other. It is the duty of every man according to his ability. If you can understand this rite, if you believe in it, if you have a proper sense of it, you certainly have the capacity and the opportunity, and it becomes your duty, to conform to it.

There is the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; we know about this; we know how it is viewed; but can you show me the least warrant for the prevailing scruples? can you show me one line of Scripture that limits this ordinance to a scant and select portion of a Christian community? Christ says, Do this in remembrance of me. Can you tell me why it is my duty to thus remember him, and not yours? "O, but you are a professor!" It is not one whit more my duty than yours. Have you intelligence, capacity, and opportunity therefor? Answer me

that. Therein is contained the key to your duty in this matter.

You see, my friends, where the application of this subject brings us. I have no design in what I say to inveigh against any body or any thing; my single aim is to rectify the conditions of religious obligation. I wish to snatch a burden that has been unnaturally and unwarrantably laid upon a few, and distribute it amongst all. Granting that certain people have taken upon themselves these duties, they have no right to any exclusive distinction thereby. The mass of our people, like serfs in despotic countries, like slaves in our own, under the present system have grown supine, dull, indifferent to their duties, privileges, and obligations. I would arouse them to a sense of what they are losing. I would kindle them, so to say, to some purposes of rebellion against this usurpation. I would incite them to the resumption of their God-given prerogatives. A professor of religion has no more right, and is under no more obligation, to pray, to have family prayer, or make public prayer, than you. Each one of you has the same right, and is under the same obligation, to do so. I care not what the clergy may say, — I care not what the popular sentiment has sanctioned, — I care not what the prevailing custom is; it is all wrong, — wrong before God, wrong in the light of the Bible, a wrong to our deepest convictions.

In the eleven years that I have been pastor of this church, I have never yet preached a discourse solely and pointedly to technical professors, as such; and for the reason, that every obligation that rests upon

them, rests with due weight upon every man in the parish according to his ability. Every man of us is bound to live well, not according to his profession, but according to his intelligence, capacity, and opportunity. Here is a poor person to be relieved, a sick man to be prayed with and comforted, a vicious man to be reformed; it is not the professor's duty to do it solely and exclusively, it is every man's duty according to his ability. The great mass feel that they have nothing to do but sin; they are not expected to pray, they may not commune, they may not participate in the public exercises of religion, and so they are left to abide in their sins. Yet out of the goodness of their hearts they come with their money, and ask to be permitted to pay a little towards the church expenses and the church needs, and their money is always well received. Bad, most bad, most unchristian state of things! Let us do what we can to change it.

Will you, each one of you, my hearers, ponder upon the great truth of this discourse, the weightier truth of Jesus? Need I say, that nature does not discriminate among us, whether we are professors or not; the season smiles, and the harvest ripens for us all alike. Neither does the discipline of life discriminate;—temptation, sadness, and woe overtake us all. Neither does sickness discriminate, nor the grave. Neither will the Judgment discriminate. The simple question of that day will be, Have we the talents committed to us, ten, five, one; and have we been good and faithful servants over them? God is going to reap among these non-professors, just as surely as he will among

the professors. And he has sown here, too; for eleven years at least, may I not say, his truth has been sown in all your hearts. God is going to gather among these non-professors, just as much as among the professors; and he is not a hard man, reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not strewed. He has been sowing and strewing here now these many years. O, will any one of us be the wicked and slothful servant? Will we imitate his conduct and invite his doom?

SERMON IV.



WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

THAT THOU MAYEST KNOW HOW THOU OUGHTEST TO BEHAVE
THYSELF IN THE HOUSE OF GOD, WHICH IS THE CHURCH OF
THE LIVING GOD, THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF THE TRUTH.—
1 Tim. iii. 15.

THE Church, the Church of God, the Evangelical Church, the Holy and Apostolic Church, — what is it? where is it? who is it?

There is the Greek Church, prevalent in Greece, Turkey, Russia, numbering seventy million souls; is that the Church? There is the Roman Church with one hundred and twenty million adherents, the English Church and its branch in this country, the Church of Scotland, the Nestorian Church, the Lutheran Church, the Abyssinian Church; are any of these, or all of them, the Church? The Church is the pillar and ground of the truth. Are these the pillar and ground of the truth? The Church is that by which the manifold wisdom of God is made known, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. In this sense, are these the Church? Are they the body of Christ, or that of which Christ is the head, which is the Church?

For the sake of convenience, and according to the natural laws of language, we apply the term *church* to a variety of things, as to a building, to a sect organically considered, to a body of professors. But the New Testament does not state the thing in this way. According to that, the Church is a body, comprising men, women, and children, of which Christ is the head. "Christ is the head of the body, the Church." The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church; and he is the saviour of the body.

There is no such language in the Bible as member of a church. According to the evangelical idea, we are members of Christ. "Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." "Know ye that your bodies are members of Christ?" Again, we are members, not of a church, but of one another. The allusion in the Bible is not to a body politic, or to a body corporate, but to the body vital. The reference is strictly an anatomical one. Here is a structure, an animal organization, like to our own bodies, of which Christ is supposed to be the head, the brain, the heart; and we are members, as hands, feet. This is the Gospel idea of the Church.

Let us suppose a living organism to pervade creation, so far as intelligent beings are concerned; veins and arteries of spiritual life flow back and forth through the whole; as respects man and the

earth, Christ is the head of that body, and we are members, and God is the head of Christ; he is head over all, he is the immense, universal life. We in this become members of Christ's body; yea, even of his bones and of his flesh.

This vital, living allusion is also preserved in that other language, I am the vine, ye are the branches, and my Father is the husbandman. The heart of God, so to say, pulsating through the universe, beats in Jesus Christ and in all his followers. There is not only one body, but one faith, one baptism. The connecting element, the arterial tide, is the Holy Spirit, which runs like blood through all pure souls, or blows like the wind across the continent of rational being. Most intimate and very strong phraseology is kept up on this subject all through the New Testament. He that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him. Christ desires that his people may be one in him and God, even as he is one with God. This unfolds the radical and primary Gospel idea of the Church.

Again, there is a secondary idea, that of a number of men in a given place, who are members of Christ and of one another; arterially, vitally, joined to Christ and God, by the Holy Spirit. Thus we read of the Church in Nymphas's house, the Church at Antioch; that is, a number of people who in those places were members of Christ, a part of the Divine organization in the universe. We read of persons being added to the Church; being added to the number of such members, or added to that Divine organization in the universe, which consists of God, Christ, and man united by the Holy Spirit.

Wherever, in any part of the world, appeared people breaking away from Paganism, or Judaism, and accepting the truth as it is in Jesus, they were called the Church. As this number increased, they chose elders, presbyters, bishops (overseers), pastors, ministers to be over them.

There is no such thing in the New Testament as what we call joining the Church ; that is, outwardly joining a company or society ; as we say, joining the Odd Fellows. The moment a man truly accepted Christ, he was a member of the Church ; that is, he was a member of Christ, a member of the Divine organization, a partaker of the New Covenant.

Will you observe this language ? “ The Lord *daily* added to the Church of such as should be saved.” Daily. People were not “ converted,” and then kept waiting two or three months before they could join the Church. The moment the Jewish eunuch believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, the moment the heathen jailer believed, he was a member of the Church.

The primary meaning of the word *church* is assembly, congregation, any collection of people. Its particular meaning is an assembly or congregation of people united to Christ. It is *par excellence* the assembly, the congregation, as the Bible is The Book. Churches are assemblies or congregations, or numbers of Christian people. This institution called the Church is of great account in the Bible. Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it ; he cherisheth and nourisheth it ; he designed it for a glorious Church.

But there is something extant in our day, calling itself the Church, — as the Greek, or Latin, or Eng-

lish, or Baptist, or Methodist Church, — about which even good men are suspicious. We find some most excellent men outside of it. They leave the Church, they disown it, they will have nothing to do with it. We find other excellent people whom you could no more persuade to join the Church, than Daniel could have been induced to join in the worship of Nebuchadnezzar. Is this what Christ and the Bible mean by the Church ?

In the text, Timothy, who had just entered the pastoral office, is directed how to behave or conduct himself in the house of God, — not meeting-house, but household, family, or assembly of God, — which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground (the stay) of the truth. The first idea, then, of the Church, considered in respect of its action and duty, is, that it is the pillar and ground or stay of the truth. Of course, it follows that that which is the pillar and stay of error is not the Church of God. This is a plain test. The doctrine that Christ is very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, is an error, a grave error, one of the most salient and pernicious heresies ever promulgated. Whatever is the pillar and stay of such an error is not the Church. It may be a church, it may have something in common with the true Church, but it is not the Church.

The doctrine of the Trinity destroys the whole idea of the Church, as it is set forth in the Bible, which is, that believers are members of Christ, even of his flesh and of his bones. If Christ be God, they cannot be members of him, except through Pan-

theism. A part of the doctrine of the Church is that God is over all, — that Christ, man, all things, are inferior to God. The notion that Christ is very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, overthrows the Divine organization, and confounds the economy of God in respect of the Church. It follows that the Greek, Roman, and English Churches are not the Church, for they all teach and hold uppermost in their teachings that Christ is very and eternal God. They may be a church; their individual votaries may belong to the true Church; but, considered as a whole, considered as a body, they are not the Church. No man who joins them joins the Church, for they are not the Church.

Another test is this, that Christ, under God, is the head of the Church. That which owns any other head than Christ is not the Church. The Pope is accounted the head of the Roman Church. At least, we know that every man, holding any sort of post in that Church, is obliged, on penalty of excommunication, to profess and swear obedience to the Roman Pontiff. The king of England, by the fundamental law of the realm, is supreme head of the Church. I am aware these things are explained as not meaning much; but when every man in the Romish Church, who holds office in that Church, is obliged to take oath to obey, not Jesus Christ, but the Roman Pontiff; when every man who holds office in England is bound to acknowledge, under oath, that the king or queen is supreme head of the Church, it shows how wide is the departure from the evangelical idea of the Church.

A third test of the Church is, that it is that by which the manifold wisdom of God in Jesus Christ might be made known. In the third chapter of Ephesians Paul is speaking of the unsearchable riches of Christ, of God's promise in Christ, of the mystery that had been hidden in God from the beginning of the world, and how he had been appointed to preach thereof, to the intent that unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus. Immediate reference is here had to the fact that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of the promise of God by Jesus Christ. The general reference, however, is to what he elsewhere styles the great mystery of the Gospel,—Christ in us the hope of glory. Here he speaks particularly of an object he has in view, that Christ may dwell in his readers' hearts; that, being rooted and grounded in love, they may know the love of Christ, and be filled with all the fulness of God. In a word, the wisdom of God purposed of old in Jesus Christ, here referred to, is what we now-a-days call the scheme of redemption. By the Church, then, the true scheme of redemption is made known. There have been many schemes of redemption. Some churches say we must accept Christ as an atoning sacrifice in order to be saved. Some teach that water-baptism is regenerative. The Roman Church says a man is damned who rejects the decrees of the Council of Trent. The English Church says a man is damned who rejects the Trinity fabri-

cated at Nice. But that only is the Church, which teaches the scheme of redemption, or mystery of God in Christ, as laid down in the Gospel.

Here, then, are three very plain and simple tests of the Church. First, that it is the pillar and stay of the truth; second, that Christ is its head; and third, that it teaches the purpose of salvation by Christ.

These three things are found in this Church. First, it is the pillar and stay of the truth. The truth in regard to God and man, revelation and nature, humanity, duty, life, death, and eternity, is here enforced and maintained. The aim of Unitarianism has ever been the simple truth of Scripture. I need not refer to the writings of Locke, Lardner, Norton, Channing, Dewey. The truths of Unitarianism, I mean the truths which God in his providence out of the Bible, in conjunction with human reason, has revealed to the Unitarian mind, are at this moment affecting, modifying, agitating, reforming, the whole system of theology. There is hardly an intelligent mind in the land, of whatever persuasion, but finds his views influenced by these Unitarian truths. The dogmas of the Trinity, Total Depravity, Vicarious Atonement, Baptismal Regeneration, everywhere are giving way, either in substance or form, to the light thus manifested. This Church, then, is the pillar and ground or stay of the truth.

Secondly, it acknowledges Christ as its head, and rejects all other heads. Creeds do not bind it, Councils are not its authority, it has no king or pope to whom it owes allegiance. It has no arti-

cles, aside from the Gospel, to be subscribed as a condition of fellowship. You acquire admission to it, not by the way of its clergy, but by way of Christ. Its criteria of heresy are reason and revelation. Unitarian churches, each and all, profess Christ to be their head. I know no exception to this. I do not know a single church amongst us that puts any thing but the Gospel between a man and his duty. I do not know of a single church amongst us that requires of its ministers, its deacons, or any of its officers or agents, any thing more than a belief that Jesus is the Son of God, or a belief in the words and teachings of Jesus and the Apostles. By this test, then, this is the Church, that body of which Christ is the head.

A third test of the Church is, that it teaches the method of salvation, originating in the wisdom of God and developed through Jesus of Nazareth. This indeed may be variously stated. "Christ in you the hope of glory," is the summary language of St. Paul. It is making Christ our Way and Truth and Life; it is possessing the spirit of Christ; it is bearing the fruit of the spirit; it is receiving the life of God into the soul through Christ; it is having Christ manifested in our mortal bodies; it is dwelling in love; this is the wisdom of God according to the purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. And this we hold and teach. By this test too we are the Church.

There is a definition of the Church in these words: "The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of

God is preached and the sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinances, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same." And by this test the Unitarian body are the Church.

Heresy, in a generic view of the term, is a departure from the word of God. The doctrines that Christ is very and eternal God, that the Holy Spirit is the third person in the Godhead, that human nature deserves God's wrath, that man can will or do no good thing, that relics are to be worshipped, of the resurrection of the body, of water-regeneration, &c., are all heresies, all departures from the word of God; and most of the so-called churches are, herein, heretical. This Church rejects these things because they are departures from the word of God. This Church is not heretical.

Orthodoxy means sound doctrine. That is sound doctrine which is according to reason and Scripture; or which is according to the word of God. The Unitarian Church is the orthodox Church.

Catholic means general, universal. That is the Catholic Church which sees all men one in Christ, which expands its sympathies wide as humanity, which recognizes the universal brotherhood of the race. The Unitarian Church is in the best sense the Catholic Church.

The *Apostolic* Church is that which has the same foundation as the Apostles; that is, Christ. This is the Apostolic Church.

Evangelical is simply Greek for *Gospel*, which is Saxon for *good news*. The message of the angels was good news, glad tidings, or Gospel; the whole

scope and spirit of Christianity is good news, glad tidings, Gospel, Evangelical. We adhere to the whole scope and spirit of Christianity; hence are we the Evangelical Church.

This, my friends, is Unitarianism. Some have been suspicious of it because they did not know what it would lead to. It seemed to be a departure from the old standard, and where it might end was not known. This is what it leads to, the recovery of the Church. It departs from dogmas that it may find the truth as it is in Jesus. It abjures Romanism, Anglicanism, Calvinism, that it may give its allegiance to the Gospel. As the Israelites left Egypt, and slavery, and onions, and garlic, and went on till they found the promised land, so have we left the churches of prelates and dogmas, of slavery, and of plenty to eat, that we might find the true Church. Our fathers left the despotism of the Old World to build up a glorious commonwealth in the New. So Unitarianism, if it has seemed to wander many months, like the Mayflower, on an unknown and tempestuous sea, is freighted with earnest, truth-loving, and God-fearing souls, and it makes land at last on the new continent of thought where it may build up a glorious church.

There are in this matter of the Church what may be denominated things indifferent. An instance is the erection of places of worship, meeting-houses, or, as they are wont to be called, churches. There is nothing in Scripture commanding or forbidding these. It is a matter which Christ left to the good sense and discretion of his followers.

There are questions of names for particular churches. The name of this is Christ Church, a name deliberately adopted by the congregation worshipping here. By this name it is known in law. By this it is distinguished from other churches in town; as the Nazarene church, St. Mark's church.

There is the use of language. We speak of church order, church music, church organ, church architecture, church bells, church going; we speak too of Church and State, we have histories of the Church. All this, I suppose, is a proper use of language. We frequently speak of going to meeting, of attending meeting. You go to the church; your place of worship is Christ Church, or simply the Church. Some people say they attend the Unitarian meeting; rather they attend Christ Church, or the Church.

In England people are divided into what are called Churchmen and Dissenters; members of the Established Church being Churchmen, and all others Dissenters. I am no Dissenter, and I repudiate the name. I never did use it, and never will, to describe myself or my brethren. I, we, all of us, are Churchmen, and for the simple fact that we adhere to, and have never left, the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and stay of the truth. The real dissenters in the world are those who have departed from the simplicity of the Gospel of Christ.

There is a question of the baptism of children. It is not specifically answered in Scripture. Christ and his Apostles dealt chiefly with Pagans and

Jews. The question for us is, When Christianity becomes the religion of a country, and children are born to Christian parents, how ought the Church to regard them? It ought to baptize them and cherish them in its bosom and nurture.

Who are members of the Church? All who are members of that body of which Christ under God is the head, are *per se* members of the Church. All who accept Christ as the Son of God, all believers in Christ, are members of the Church. We are all members of the Church just so far as we love God and goodness. All who do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly before their God, are members. The peacemakers, the poor in spirit, are members. When the wicked man turneth from the wickedness he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he becomes a member. All of us, my friends, just so far as we have an interest in Christ, and are desirous to know his truth, to do his will, to be possessed of his spirit, to imitate his example, are so far forth members of his body, and are his Church. Just so far as we seek to build upon the foundation of the Prophets and Apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, as individuals or a community, we are his Church.

You see, my friends, what, as part of the Unitarian and Liberal body, our position is, and what God is calling us to, and how we are bound to vindicate and maintain the dispensation committed unto us.

SERMON V.



BIRTH-RELATION TO THE CHURCH.

FOR AS WE HAVE MANY MEMBERS IN ONE BODY, AND ALL MEMBERS HAVE NOT THE SAME OFFICE; SO WE, BEING MANY, ARE ONE BODY IN CHRIST, AND EVERY ONE MEMBERS ONE OF ANOTHER. — Romans xii. 4, 5.

I HAVE shown that we are The Church; also, that all religious and Christian obligations devolve to every man according to his several ability.

I purpose now to inquire into the obligation which every man sustains to the Church. I have already, under the general argument, intimated that every man owes obligation to prayer, to the communion, and other pious offices, according to his intelligence, capacity, and opportunity, in respect of such things. I purpose at the present time to consider the Church by itself, as one of the radical forms of human society, and including all these duties under the summary head of duties which the Church represents, or which are its peculiar care. I purpose, I say, to inquire into the ground of this universal obligation to the Church, and to examine more particularly the nature of our relation to it.

Why does every man of us owe obligation to the

Church of Christ, or that which the Church represents, or which it prescribes? How is it that I, as minister of the Church, can urge you, all of you, without discrimination, to the performance of these duties? There must be involved here some simple principle of reason and nature. Can we discover it? Why does a man owe obligation to other things, in respect of which such obligation is supposed to accrue? Why do we all owe obligation to the state, to the government of this empire? Why to the family, why to the city, why to society in general? Is it because the state, the family, society in general, protects us and does us good? For the same reason do you all owe obligation to the Church, inasmuch as it protects and blesses you all. It invites you all within its walls, it pours its light over you all, it visits you all in sickness, it brings your children, without distinction, into its Sunday schools, and is ever ready to shield your virtues, further your happiness, and crown you with immortal life. For this cause, then, if there were no other, you are all obligated to the Church, each one according to his several ability.

But this is not all; there is something deeper than this, something underlying these reasons. I observe that, as regards a great variety of human relations, *birth* is the primary ground of obligation. As to most of what may be called the great natural relations of man, this is the primary ground of obligation. Why does a man owe obligations to, or how can he claim protection from, these United States? Fundamentally, from the fact that he is born here. Why is an

Englishman similarly situated in respect of England, or a Chinese in respect of China? Mainly from the same fact, that he is born there. Or if it is because we are citizens of this republic, how came we to be citizens? As regards the great mass of us, because we were born here. Birth makes every man a citizen of the state, and he is to be so considered, until, by some overt act, he forfeits the rights of citizenship. On the other hand, why do these United States owe protection to us? Fundamentally for the reason I have stated, that we are born here; or if because we are citizens, still we are citizens because we are born here.

This protection is owed indiscriminately to man, woman, and child. It would not seem to be earned; it would not seem to be in recompense of good deeds on our part. This government owes protection to the infant of a day, as well as to the greatest man in the land, and for the reason that it is born here. So the family owes support to its members, fundamentally from this accident of birth. So, in general, society owes something to all that are born into it. So, reciprocally, all persons owe something to society into which they are born.

Let me illustrate the point. Let me take a case so far removed from common life as to be free of the objections which, from a thousand causes, in treating subjects of this kind, are wont to embarrass our view. I will imagine a case like this; that a number of unenlightened and heathen people are thrown upon an uninhabited island, which they make their permanent abode. In a few years, as we may sup-

pose, they become in a measure educated. They wish to form a government, and found a nation. By some wonder, they discover a political constitution like that of one of our States. They adopt it. In all solemnity and with much parade it is proclaimed the fundamental law of the land. By and by another generation springs up; children are born to these first settlers. Have they any thing to do with this constitution, or it with them? Have they any right to it? Are they in the state, or out of it? Do they belong to it, or are they in a condition of outlawry? They are part of the state, you say. But for what reason? This, simply and circularly, that they are children of their fathers. In other words, birth is the foundation of this political relation. The children are born into the republic. If you please, it is the right of nature, it is a God-given right, it is an inalienable right; yet, the literal, prime foundation of the right is birth.

So much in regard of the State, or politics. Let us now turn to the matter of the Church, or religion. We will suppose this people in some way to find a Bible, and to become believers in Christ, and to accept the Gospel as their rule of faith and guide of life. With all solemnity and prayer in the great congregation they do this. In other words, they form a church. They choose a pastor, they meet on the Sabbath, they have the sacraments. They become a church, a body Christian. All things go on well. By and by a new generation springs up. Where, as respects the church, do these belong? Are they in it, or out of it? Do they owe it any

thing, or it them? Are they parts of it, or in a condition of outlawry, disfranchisement, excommunication? Is not the church over and around these children, as much as the state? Is not that pastor pastor of all the people, as much as that governor is governor of all the people? Need I make formal answer to these questions? This new generation has relations to the church in virtue of birth. These children are children of the state in virtue of being children of their parents, and for the same reason are they children of the church.

I can perceive no flaw in this course of argument. I know of no possible escape from these conclusions. That church is as much beholden to the children of those parents as that state is; it is as much bound to look after them, to provide for their weal in spiritual things, as the state is in temporal things. The church is as much an entity as the state is. It is as much a permanent interest, as much a fundamental organism, as the state is. It is as much needed as the state. A good religion is as proper to man as a good government.

And what connects the successive generations with the institutions of the past is, primarily, birth. Let us suppose this were not the case. Let us suppose the children of the country to which I have referred, — or rather, to bring the matter nearer home, let us suppose the children of those who adopted the Constitution of this country in 1784, — that these children, I say, in virtue of birth, as being children, held no sort of relation of duty, service, or interest, to that Constitution. Why, that Constitution and the

union of these States would end, would be annihilated, with the death of those who first adopted it, and the next generation would be left all afloat, without a government, without laws, without a country, without unity. If the rule of descent does not hold, the link is broken that connects one age with another, and the institutions of the past with the future. The extant generation of the people of this country must either live without a government, or go on to form a new one, or split into a thousand governments, each of which shall last during the lifetime of its founders only, unless this hereditary principle be a good one.

But to turn back to that imaginary land. The fathers die, the state does not die; it is perpetuated in their children. Neither does the church die; that, likewise, is perpetuated in the children. The children are bound to take up the church when their fathers leave it, just as much as they are to maintain the state, and carry it on.

This is clear, my friends, is it not? All the people owe obligation to that state, do they not? And do not all the people owe obligation to that church? And does not this obligation both to church and state continue through all generations, that is, so long as the state and the church continue?

Have I not, my friends, pointed out the fundamental ground of obligation to the church? Have I not elicited the correct principle of the thing? Is there one in this assembly who thinks I have not stated it right? Is there one who sees any considerable weakness in the case I have undertaken to make

out? Of course, I speak in an abstract and general manner, and without reference to local or temporary exceptions.

As regards that country, you may say persons coming to reside in it from abroad, from other nations, are not admitted to the state, or to the privilege of citizenship, without probation. True; but the probation ends with them. The children of these naturalized parents fall into the general flow of things, and become, like all the rest, members by birth. Thus, in these United States, an Englishman must wait five years, I think, before he can become to all intents an American, or a citizen of the republic. But the Church, the true Church, is more universal than any existing state is. There is no republic of nations, there is no community of republics. If there were, this law of naturalization would be greatly modified. As it is, England being a monarchy, there would seem to be a propriety in allowing its people who come here time to become republicans. But the true Church is one in all parts of the world. Of course, the Church of England, the various Trinitarian churches in this country, however much truth they may embody, are not to us the true Church. But taking the Unitarian Church to be the true Church, I say it is one in all parts of the world.

Let me ask a moment's attention to this word *naturalization*. It is a singular word, perhaps a strong word, a term of political economy. It means that a foreigner becomes a natural citizen; he is in-natured, so to say, to the country he joins; he becomes the same as a *natural-born* citizen, and *his*

children by birth become citizens. Herein is involved the central idea of this discourse, that a man is a citizen *by nature*, that he is a member of the state by nature, in other words, as we have used the phrase, by birth. That is, this naturalization is simply taking a man out of foreignness, out of an exotic condition, and making him *indigenous* to the new soil, making this his natural place, restoring him to a condition of nature here. To his children, even as to seeds that drop from a transplanted tree, this becomes their native soil; they grow up on the same earth where their parents last lived, they bloom beneath the same sky, they are obedient to the same laws.

This is naturalization. And here I am reminded, frequently and sadly reminded, of what our Saviour said; that the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. As to certain of these things in the state to which I have referred, men have gone straight forward, and acted in a rational and common-sense way; but in matters of the Church they have bungled shockingly. It is nowhere distinctly decreed, indeed, in the Constitution of the United States, that the rule of succession to the rights, duties, and privileges of citizenship shall be just as I have stated, by birth. Yet this is the great principle that underlies our country, our history, our laws, our entire being as a nation.

I appeal to legal gentlemen before me if it is not so. And if these legal gentlemen are so wise in their own affairs, why will they not help us in ours? Why will they not throw some light on the darkness of us ministers, who are supposed to represent the

children of light? For of a truth this whole church matter is in Egyptian darkness. As regards the state, birth constitutes the prime law of relation to it. Even naturalization is no exception to this rule, since it only indicates an attempt to bring all such residents as happen not to be born here, into this birth condition. My conclusion is, that really, in any true idea of the Church, in the actual condition of any true Church, birth constitutes a ground of relation to it.

Does history or experience throw any light on this subject? This principle is not only implied, it is distinctly asserted, in the Jewish economy. The original covenant with Abraham was to him and his seed for ever. And this is the key to all the subsequent history of the Jews. So Moses uses this striking and most appropriate language: "Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: that thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments which I command thee; thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life," — i. e. all the years of thine existence as a nation. The rule of circumcision is explicit: "He that is eight days old shall be circumcised amongst you, every man-child in your generations, he that is born in the house." When the law was publicly proclaimed, they were directed to "gather the people together, men and women and children, that they might hear and learn, and that their children which had not known any thing might hear and

learn to fear the Lord." So of particular rites and ordinances, as the Feast of the Passover, and the Tabernacles; these were to be kept by the Israelites and their children through all generations. In other words, Judaism, in all its extent and import, established and perpetuated itself on the basis of propagation.

Will it be said that, among that ancient people, Church and State were one? What difference does that make? Even if these become separate, as with us, how does the principle of continuity by birth fail, or hold in one case more than the other? This rule does apply to the State of these times, why should it not to the Church?

I turn to the primitive Christian era, — when a Church was formed, so to say, without any State; when in the midst of corrupt and wicked nations a new element of spiritual life developed itself, and a community arose containing within its bosom the germs of both Church and State, but of a much purer type; and in those times, I shall contend, the principle to which I have adverted prevailed. I shall stand on this, until evidence to the contrary, of the existence of which I am ignorant, shall be produced. Indeed, I shall insist that this idea of natural perpetuation, or perpetuation by birth, was transferred, bodily, from Judaism to Christianity. It underlies the whole Gospel system. Christ could have had no other expectation than that his kingdom was to descend from father to son through all generations. So Christ called the little children to him and blessed them, as if, at the very earliest possible point, to win and ini-

tiate them to the coming dispensation. So Peter says, "The promise is unto you, and to your children." So Paul calls us the spiritual seed of Abraham. Young Christian women are to love their husbands and their children. Children are to obey their parents in the Lord. John rejoices that the little children are walking in the truth. Paul expressly argues that Christianity is thus continuous, in order that the promise may be sure to all the seed. There is the remarkable passage (1 Cor. vii. 14) where Paul, alluding to the question whether a Christian might marry a heathen, says, if two persons are so married, let them not separate, — "for the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." "Already," says Dr. Neander, commenting on this passage, "the children of Christians were distinguished from the children of heathen, and might be considered as belonging to the Church." "We have here," he adds, "an indication of the preëminence belonging to children born in a Christian community."

Am I mistaken in saying that the original Christian Church could have contemplated nothing else than that the Church of the fathers would become the Church of the children, to the end of all things? Or are we in this taking some things for granted which do not exist? Are we begging the question? I mean, is the Church, like the State, like the family, to be considered one of the permanent and comprehensive institutions of the race? I have

supposed it was so. I have argued on that supposition. Is there any mistake here? Was the Church designed for one age? Was it ever designed for a limited class of human beings? Is the Church to be considered like a committee of arrangements got up for an occasion, and expiring when the occasion ends? Is the Church like a copartnership, that ends with the death of its members, or may be terminated at any moment by dissolution?

I will further illustrate my point by putting it in this light; that as things are, even in our most erroneous parishes, the Church has, as it were by nature, as it were on this simple basis of birth-relation, a good deal to do with you, with each one of the people, with men, women, and children indiscriminately; and out of this I shall argue that you all indiscriminately have a certain vital, natural birth-relation to the Church. For instance, the Church through its pastors visits all your families, saints and sinners; it marries you; it buries you; it invites you all to its sanctuary; it preaches to you, prays for you, pronounces its benedictions on you all; it has its directions, its consolations, its admonitions, its helps for you all, without respect of persons. You have the Bible, the Church constitution and laws, in all your houses. Your children attend the Church Sunday schools. The Church, so to say, gives the Sabbath to you all alike, and you all suspend your secular business on that day. More; as I showed a while since, the Church asks your aid, for its meeting-houses, for the pay of its ministers, and for its various benevolent objects. Now what is it that brings this church,

or me, its pastor, into this near personal connection with you all? It is this of which I speak, nature, birth. I mean, that as this church has had connection with the parents, so it has connection with the children, because they are your children. Whatever tie binds you to the Church or its minister becomes a tie of nature in your children, and will continue a birth-tie in your children's children. I am called to bury a child. Why? Why not somebody else, why anybody? For the simple reason that you have a certain connection with the Church, and the child is your child, and I am pastor of it, because it is your child.

In many places a minister, that is, an officer of the Church, formerly would not, in many places now such a man will not, bury an unbaptized child; because it did not belong to the Church, and the Church could take no cognizance of it, and it could not be admitted into consecrated, that is, Church burying-ground; and unshriven, unblest, it was sent to moulder in the desert. But Protestant ingenuity has contrived a way to avoid this shamelessness; our ministers will go to work in a common-sense way, and bury such children, while at the same time they waive all allusion to the Church which in reality employs them. So, too, they would not marry unbaptized persons; and would not now, save that our secular rulers, wiser in their generation than the heads of the Church, have so managed matters as to take this affair of marriage wholly out of ecclesiastical control, and hence by a sort of necessity the

clergy I refer to are driven to compromise their ground somewhat.

Well, if I, if this church, of which I am pastor, holds this important and responsible relation to you, you all hold an important and responsible relation to me and the Church. As the President of the United States holds an important relation to all the people of the land, so do I, your pastor, to all the people of this parish. And as all the people of the Union hold a certain important and natural relation to the President, and to the government he represents, so also do all the people of the parish hold an important and natural relation to me, the pastor, and to the Church which I represent. As the people of the United States, in their successive generations, are born into these important relations to the State, so are these parishioners, in their successive generations, born into important relations to the Church.

There is involved here a plain principle of reciprocity. If I hold a religious relation to you, you hold a religious relation to me; if I am your Christian preacher, you are my Christian hearers; if I am under church obligations to you, you are under church obligations to me. Will any reply, that neither they nor their fathers were technical members of the Church, and therefore the principle we have been unfolding does not apply to them or their children? But you are church-goers, church-worshippers, church-supporters; you have come yourselves, and brought your families here, for months and years; you consider me, the pastor of this church, beholden to you

and your families, and on the principle of reciprocity you are in like manner beholden to me and the Church. But more than this. On the principle of naturalization, which the world happily furnishes us, you are brought into intimate relations to the Church. Granting that your parents were not church-members; granting that you, before you came hither, attended no church; your very coming here, and being here, and staying here, naturalizes you to this church. I grant we have prescribed no term or method of probation; only I say this, that any man or family that truly worships here, belongs here; any one that awakens in behalf of himself or his family a pastoral and church interest, is so far obligated to the pastor and the Church. As regards a great multitude who consider themselves in a sense aliens and foreigners to the Church, they connect themselves with it by naturalization; and this covers the whole ground, — covers it not only for themselves, but their posterity after them.

Some have a notion they are only connected with the Society. A man the other day told me, he had indeed paid something to the Society, but that he did not belong to the Church; and clearly intimated that he was under no sort of obligation either to the Church or the pastor. I am not, in any high and proper sense of the term, pastor of *a society*. The Society is a thing of the law; the law makes and unmakes societies; the law of the Society has changed many times in this country. I am pastor of *a church*; was ordained over *a church*. The Society, as a *legal entity*, I have had nothing to

do with; I never attended one of their meetings; I know not that I ever looked into its book of records. So that, really, I have little or nothing to do with *the Society*. Here, indeed, may be some interesting questions, not as yet settled, which I shall not now enter upon. Now, when men who have been here year after year, with their families, and have involved me in intimate relations with themselves and families, turn round and say that they have only had a certain connection with the Society, and clearly imply that they are under no sort of obligations to this Church of Christ, or to me, its pastor, what do such things mean? We are all at loose ends on this subject. It is in the hope of being able to do something toward setting us right, that I say what I have, and perhaps weary you with topics of this sort.

I hold this for self-evident, that, in a Christian community, the people hold important relations to Christianity; that in a community of churches, in other words, in a Church community, a Christian Church community, they hold important relations to the Church. For instance, that here in New England, here on New England soil, the people here, all of them, old and young, hold as vital connection with our Christian Church here, as they do with the political State here; and if the Church here is under any sort of obligation to labor for, pray for, bless a single man, that man is under equal obligation to love and cherish the Church. If a man has merely a financial connection with *the Society* and has no obligations to *the Church* or its pastor, — no moral, religious,

high obligations,—then the Church has no obligations to him. On common principles of justice, he cannot expect the pastor to do any thing for him, or his family; if he is sick, he cannot expect the pastor to visit him; if he should die, he cannot expect the pastor to bury him. Indeed, he has no pastor, no church.

Will you say that, by pressing the analogy between the State and the Church, I must needs imply a national religion, as we have a national government? We have in an important sense a national religion, we are called a Christian nation, we are part of Christendom. I wish we had more national religion, I do not want to see a national creed. However, it is granted that, as a people, we are divided on theological subjects. There are Jews amongst us, and Mormons, and all kinds of notions. But suppose the worst. Suppose there were but one true Church in the land, and that this assembly, gathered in these walls, were it; the case would not be altered, the argument would be the same. We who are assembled here would all be beholden to that Church, we and our children after us for ever. Inasmuch as, in virtue of being born, or living here, you belong to the State, so in the case supposed would you in a sense belong to the Church, even if there were no other church in the land.

But you say, even if all persons in a sense belong to the State, they are not allowed the highest privileges of citizenship till they are twenty-one years of age, and they cannot fill certain offices till they are older than that. True, but they enjoy a multitude

of state privileges before that period. Every one, *at birth*, shares and enjoys the protection of the laws and care of government. Every child has the privilege of schools, of the highway, of support,—of a thousand things. A babe that shall be afloat on the wide sea, a thousand leagues away, is still under protection of the flag that symbolizes the nation. In many of the old churches, custom, if not canon, prescribed an age when persons should begin to commune, that is, be admitted to the highest privileges of church-membership. In England this age is sixteen years. In that country a particular age is prescribed also as necessary to the holding of various offices of the Church. There is no more difficulty in respect of the Church than of the State. Even here in New England, while our platforms are silent on the subject, universal custom, as well as common sense, without fixing upon the precise age a man must reach, always requires a certain maturity of mind and heart in those who would exercise ecclesiastical functions.

In this analogy between the State and the Church, we come to another interesting and important point. You say that all are not citizens, that some have forfeited their state rights, that for crimes and misdemeanors they are shut in prisons. Will you observe this,—that every man is *presumed* to be a worthy citizen until by competent tribunals he is proved to be a wicked man; that the normal, natural, birth condition of every man is citizenship; and that any change in that relation is an after affair, a superinduced and artificial event? But the point is

this. As the State has the power of punishment, so the Church has the power of discipline; a power given by Christ, often exercised, too often abused; — but she has the power. As the State can outlaw or attain, so the Church can excommunicate. You see what the State does in *assuming* that every man belongs to it, except on the condition above stated. Has not the Church as good a right, is not the Church of consequence enough, holds it not sufficient breadth of place in the permanent interests of this world, is it not imperatively bound, to consider all men in a certain sense connected with it, until by an overt act of wrong-doing they become liable to its censures, or provoke its penalties? Popular usage, as you well know, reverses every thing; it *presumes* nobody to belong to the Church, or to have any thing to do with it, until by some special act in after life they render themselves proper *candidates* for its favor; — thus, in a Christian community, in all our Christian congregations, virtually unchurching the great majority, excommunicating our wives and little ones, actually damning the infant at its sainted mother's breast.

There are in all communities recusants both to Church and State, commonly known as Come-outers; we have them in this country. All I have to say about them is, the Church can get along with them as well as the State. The best way, perhaps, is to let them alone. Let the Church reach and bless them if it can. Yet in many instances that which calls itself the Church has so conducted, I do not much wonder men leave it. Their duty

in the case, however, would seem to be to revive and perpetuate a true church form and feeling among themselves. Of course I need not say, if the Church or the State does wrong, sins against God, and violates human conscience, no man is bound to obey or to regard it.

Will you remark some singular results? In a town not a thousand miles from here, where is what is called a society, a meeting-house, a Sunday school, Sabbath services, for the most of the time a preacher, an organ, a choir, I was told by one of the parties interested, they were not a church. A religious society without a church! I have heard of a state without a king, a church without a bishop; but it was reserved for the present time, so fertile in improvement and invention, to produce a religious society without a church. Again, it has happened during the religious controversies that have agitated New England, that the entire body of so called church-members, with their minister, have withdrawn from a given parish, while the majority of the people from conscience' sake remained. The question I would ask is, Did no church of Christ remain? Sometimes the non-communicants have themselves gone off and built up, I was going to say, a church of their own. Did they not become a church of Christ, — that in which, as we believe, was all truth, all evangelical doctrine?

My friends, we are in a position happily, providentially adapted to rectify the errors of the past; at least for ourselves, and our children after us. We reject the dogma of total depravity, we reject

the fable of *regenerative* baptism, which was invented to heal what the other destroyed. We admit baptism, and do not at the same time cast off the baptized ones. We believe at least in the innocence of the babe; we believe at least that the child has a susceptibility of goodness, and of the Christian life; and we see in baptism a seal of the covenant which God would make with us and ours for ever. We recognize, too, the higher privilege of the Holy Communion. And is there any thing to hinder us and all Liberal Christians from taking that stand which God would have his Church adopt? Will not these adults feel, will they not go on to feel, that, as it were by a species of naturalization, they sustain vital, interesting, solemn relations to the Church? Will you not educate, train your children to feel that they, *by birth*, because they are your children, likewise hold these most affecting relations to sacred things, and are growing up members of Christ and of one another? Will any man of you ever again tell me he has no obligations to the Church?

Like the genius of a departed faith, I stand here in the midst of the desolations which for ages have been sweeping over the world, the desolations of error and superstition, bigotry and craft, that have swept over the Zion of New England; I stand in the midst of men who have grown cold, selfish, and indifferent to every thing relating to the Church; in the midst of dark and forbidding influences, surrounded by the monuments of deserted truth, I stand here to appeal to you, to lift my voice in the

midst of the desolations, and beg and plead with you, that the Church of God may have a place in your hearts. I ask that an attachment to it may be revived, or created, in your souls.

SERMON VI.



THE CHURCH, ILLUSTRATED BY THE FAMILY AND THE STATE.

I SPEAK CONCERNING THE CHURCH.—Ephesians v. 32.

THERE are three great enduring and divine organizations of men, or, if you please, social relations of human beings, the Family, the State, the Church. I call them enduring, because as long as man lasts on the earth they will last; I call them divine, because they have their foundation in the will of God. I might with equal truth say they have their foundation in nature, but this would be a tautological expression, since nature is of God's ordaining and the creature of his power. I am aware of discussions that proceed on the hypothesis of man as a pure individual or solitary being. Sometimes we hear the expression, man in a state of nature. But, for all practical purposes, man never is a purely individual or solitary being. He always is in society, and, if you please, out of a state of nature; not a felicitous phrase, I allow, since nothing is more unnatural than the solitary state. At least the great mass of those of whom this discourse speaks, and to whom it refers,

are to be considered in this light. An infant is in society, most helplessly, most pitiably so. It is in the family. Birth implies society. All human beings around me exist in some form of society. Man is social in his nature, and ever tends to some mode of assembly, aggregation, or whatever we may call it. Man is not complete, not developed, not perfected, except in mutual relation with his fellows. An example of purest individuality or extreme solitariness of a voluntary sort, may be found in the species of monks called anchorites and hermits. An instance of an involuntary sort is seen in persons condemned to the solitude of a prison. We conceive both of these cases to be departures from the great law of humanity.

Well, since men must come together, what are the leading modes of that union? We have said these are three, the Family, the State, the Church. At the basis of these lie three leading ideas or sentiments: religion, which expresses our relation to God; morality, which expresses our relation to our fellow-beings in general; conjugal affection, which unites the human race in pairs. These organizations and these ideas are prime, fundamental, and universal. In all parts of the world, in every age, among all races, you will find men uniting on these forms. Man eternally tends to the infinite, which is religion; he eternally tends to an intercourse determined by geographic, or lingual, or other affinities, which is politics; man and woman eternally tend together, which is love. That is, there is no people without a Family, a State, and a Church; albeit in many instances the forms of these things are very

rude and the point of junction very dimly defined. At least, in proportion as man advances in civilization, the more entirely and distinctly are these affinities made manifest. Yet I can hardly recall even a savage tribe that does not, either by priesthood or ritual, by altar or worship, express its relation to God.

I am aware that I use the term Church in rather a wide sense. I do not mean by it the Christian Church alone. We often hear the expression, the Jewish Church. There is also the Mohammedan Church. So everywhere is that, which, organically, expresses a people's relation to its God. A term, again, that expresses the idea of State is Politics, or we say men unite for political purposes. A synonyme for State, very nearly, is Government, Country, Empire. Different forms of states or governments are monarchies, republics, and all the intermediate shades of civil polity. The object of government, as expressed in the Constitution of Maine, is to establish justice, insure tranquillity, provide for our mutual defence, promote the common welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity. People unite in the Church for religious purposes, to cultivate their higher natures, and sanctify themselves before the Lord their God. There is hardly a good synonyme for Church; we sometimes borrow the Jewish phrase Zion; in our vernacular we have a rude way of expressing it, by the words *meeting*, *meeting-house*. There is the Christian Church, wherein people unite for Christian and religious purposes; or for religious purposes as modified by Christ. It is of this that I now speak, and when

I use the word *religious*, it will be in the sense of Christian-religious.

We denote the Family sometimes by the words house, household, domestic relations, conjugal tie, and the like. There is a word that expresses the deep thing which the Family is to us, that is, *home*. The Family continues the race on the earth, in it are nurtured some of our deepest affections, to it evermore gravitate the hearts and the loves of all well-regulated minds.

The Family is holy, the State is holy, the Church is holy. That is, in their true actuality, they are all forms in which men devote themselves to what is agreeable to God. In other words, they are all of Divine appointment.

In some countries, chiefly in such as are monarchical, there is what is called a union of Church and State. The king or monarch is head of both. This is particularly the case in Russia and England. The constitution of the Church in those countries, like that of the State, is purely monarchical. The people have no more rights in the one than in the other. In this country there is a separation of Church and State; and what is noticeable, while the Constitution of our State is republican, that of some of our churches is purely monarchical; as the Roman Catholic, the Episcopalian, and the Methodist. The reason is, that these churches all retain essentially the same constitution they had before the Revolution. The people have no rights in either; the people cannot determine their own creed, nor settle their own minister, nor consecrate their own church

edifices, nor form their own churches. All these depend, not on the king indeed, but on a power above them, called a prelacy. Most of the New England Churches, however, as the Unitarian, Universalist, Baptist, Swedenborgian, and some others of the Trinitarian communion, have what is called a congregational constitution, which in church matters means the same as democratic in state matters. The congregation, the people, rule or determine their own affairs.

The law of the Family is determined partly by the State, and partly by the Church. Its great principle is mutual love. The State says what shall constitute marriage, and the Bible says how married people shall behave. In Roman Catholic countries, I believe, the Church controls marriages altogether. Yet in general it may be observed, the Family in its essential constitution is wholly independent of the State.

The State in some regions is very large, as Russia, China; in others small, as Denmark, and some of our particular States, as Delaware. The Family consists essentially of two, husband and wife, and directly and collaterally it enlarges, but, as compared with other organizations, is always small. The State is geographically limited, the Family is confined to the house; the Church, in its true idea, is universal. Of particular churches, some are large, some small.

Man tends evermore to society, we say; and in addition to these three dominant organizations are others, smaller and secondary. The most interesting of these is the school. This is not essential,

like the Family, the Church, and the State; since it is conceivable that the Family or the Church should educate the children. The school is a convenience; families combine and hire some one to educate their children in common. In this country the State says families shall so combine. The Church blesses the school. In some countries the Church interferes and directs the school. There are other organizations, some of business, which we call companies or incorporations; others of conviviality, called clubs; others of pleasure, that go by various names, — assemblies, parties. But none of these secondary organizations are everlasting. We spend only a few days at school, we dissolve our companies, we are at a party only of an evening. We are always in the Family, in the State, in the Church; this is a cardinal distinction. We are born in the Family, and in some form continue in it till we die. We are born in the State, and are always its subjects, and always claim its protection. So we are born into the Church, and are always members of it. This, I mean, is the true idea. Our relation to the Family, in some sense, terminates at death, and so does that to the State; our Church connection continues beyond the grave. Or however it may be with these others, the Church at least, beginning on earth, survives in heaven.

Next as to the use of words. The *definition* of State, Government, Country, is political society, but its *proper name* is State, Government, Country, &c. The *definition* of Family is married society, the *proper name* is Family. So of the Church, the *definition*

is religious society, but this is not *its name*. The only *name* for the Church is *the Church*. All organizations, collections, meetings of men, are societies; but each of the societies, of the principal and universal ones at least, has a distinct, or proper, or generic *name*, as well as a *definition*. So in other things; *rose* is a kind of flower, *brook* is a form of water, but the proper organic name is *rose*, *brook*. Now in regard to every thing else but the Church we use language properly. We never say, the political society of Maine is large and prosperous. We say, the State of Maine is large and prosperous. Yet when we come to speak of the Church, we *always use the definition*, and not *the name*, and say, the religious society, or perhaps more curtly still, *the society*, is large and prosperous. A man never says his married society is small, but his family is small. So we say, the State, or, synonymously, the government, empire, of Great Britain is powerful; we do not say, the political society of Great Britain is powerful. *Country*, again, expresses the deep sentiment of the state, the nation; and a man with feeling exclaims, O my country! So *home* expresses the deep sentiment of the Family, and one cries out, Shall I never see my home again? As regards this other thing, there is nothing left but to say, *O my religious society!* *Society* is a terribly cold word; there is not a particle of warmth in it; it is a mere term of the intellect, of philosophy, or of law.

I say these three great everlasting forms of human society all have a name, a proper name; but here in this community, and elsewhere, we always call two

of them by their proper names, and the other rarely or never; we call it by its definition, a thing almost unexampled in the whole use of language. There are what we call, and rightly enough, societies; as Temperance, Tract, Colonization Societies. These are not the eternal forms of human society; they are temporary and special organizations, for which there exists no proper name.

Now, as to the use of the word *church* for the place of worship or building in which a church meets, it is natural, and agreeable to all analogy. The word *house* expresses not only a building in which a family resides, but the family itself. There are many instances of this in Scripture. Cornelius "feared God, with all his house." So *city* means a local place; as one says, I am going to the city. It means, also, the people of the city; as, the city was in an uproar, or the city voted so and so. So *bench* means a seat; it is also used to signify those who sit on it; as, in legal phrase, the full bench decided so and so. So, among the Jews, Synagogue meant a collection of people, and the place in which the people collected. So Church expresses not only a people religiously associated, but, agreeably to all philological analogy, it expresses also the place where they meet. Then, again, the building is very properly called *church*, because the building, if properly constructed, if rightly cared for, becomes a symbol in wood and stone of our faith and love, our zeal and devotion.

Curiously, with many, the building, the wooden walls, is called the Church, while the people, the

living souls, are called the Society. This week, in a religious newspaper, I saw the term Church used a dozen times, more or less, as applied to the building, and Society invariably used as applied to the people that worshipped in it.

There are the words *meeting* and *meeting-house*. *Meeting* is a mere synonyme of *society*, and expresses just as much. It is no proper name; it is a term of definition. All assemblings together of human beings are meetings or societies; the term expresses the simple fact of passing out of the individual into the social state. The legislature is a meeting, a picnic is a meeting, the state is a meeting, the family is a meeting, a party is a meeting. Yet, in speaking of the legislature, one never says he is going to meeting. Speaking of going to a party, you never say, I am going to meeting. This peculiar use of the word *meeting* is, in the main, an Americanism, and a vulgarity. Nobody uses it in dignified discourse.

According to the true theory of our subject, everybody is in the Family, in the State, in the Church. Yet the power of expulsion is claimed for each of these great organizations. Expulsion from the State is called banishment, or outlawry, a thing more practised in ancient than modern times; expulsion from the Church is called excommunication; from the Family, disowning. This expulsion is one of the greatest calamities that can befall a human being. To be an outlaw, or an excommunicate, or a disowned, — to have no country, no home, no church, — is among the greatest of evils.

Well, every man is presumed to be in the State, the Family, the Church, until, by due process of law, by overt offence proved against him, he is formally ejected. The point is not for a man to show cause why he should be in the Church, but for the Church to show cause why he should not be there. In these times, the State does not directly outlaw people, but in cases of high crimes and misdemeanors virtually does this by sending them to prison. Such offenders cease to be members of the State. Their political or state rights are taken away. But every man born on our soil can claim all political or state rights till such offence is proved. He is a state member in virtue of birth. Here and there you find persons who, in the providence of God, are out of the Family. Their parents are dead; their brothers and sisters, their husbands or wives, their children, all are dead and gone; they have no family, no home, no place for the family affections to be garnered and family joys to be indulged. They are, in a word, *homeless*; and I ask if there is a word in the language that contains a more vivid picture of sadness and sorrow than that? Well, *churchless* is just as sad a word; and if we had any sort of right conception of the subject, we should feel just as wretched to belong to no church as to belong to no family. See how it is in the State; look at Kossuth; what is the trouble in his mind? what affects him? Why, he has lost his country; to him there is no true Hungarian state. Hungary exists, and the people, and her waters, and her skies; but Kossuth's ideal of a state has ceased to exist. How would any one of

us to-day feel, if, in some strange catastrophe, we all at once should find we had no country, no state, no government; that Russia had overturned the whole framework of our political society?

There are but three great leading, divine, and eternal organizations of mankind,—the Family, the State, and the Church; and all men are *presumed to be* in each of them. The Family organizes the affections; the State, political relations; and the Church is the organization of the religious element. The Church expresses eternally our relation to God; the State, citizenship; the Family, the ties of husband and wife, parent and child. You are all interested in the State; you rejoice to belong to it, and to feel that you are a part of it. Indeed, politics, or the management of state affairs, is a ruling passion with some of you. You are all interested in the Family, either in that to which you now belong, or in the forming of a new one. What interest have you in the Church? People are proud of state offices, and like to be called by the title of their offices, as President, Governor, Mayor, Esquire, Judge; proud, too, of military offices, as General, Colonel. People are everywhere getting ashamed of a church office; indeed, that good congregational title of Deacon is fast disappearing from current speech. There is no dignity or honor attached to it. To have an office in the State is honorable, and it is a breach of decorum on state occasions, nay, it is a great offence, to omit the title. To have an office in the Church is deemed a sort of drudgery. This shows to what a pass we have come.

The great mass of the people are all out of the Church. What calls itself the Church is merely a select clique within what is called the Society, — a clique growing smaller with every year; and the whole idea of the Church is fast fading from the popular mind. There are fathers who are unwilling to consecrate their sons to the service of the Church, not willing to educate them for the ministry. They yield them to the State without a scruple. The ambition of our young men is not to be ministers or bishops of the Church, but to be lawyers, to go to Congress, to attain judgeships. The path of honor and dignity leads that way. There is little honor or dignity in an office in that highest of organizations, that empire of supremest ideas, the Church.

My friends, I ask you if things shall go on so? I ask you, as reasonable and Christian men, to help me lift up the Church to its true place. I am going to labor for this, and I want your aid. I ask you to accept the great idea of the Church, and adjust yourselves thereto. Some say people will be good and religious without the Church; so, I say, people may be good and love one another without the Family; people may be good and honest without the State. Break up your State and your Family, and see where you will be. You say we may have bad members. So you may have bad children, bad citizens; what are you going to do about it? You say the State and the Family will get on without the Church. Nay, they will not.

Things have gone on in a slipshod sort of way tolerably well, so far, because of an overlying and over-

awing church sentiment, derived from our fathers. Moreover, the religious element, like all other deep, eternal elements, evermore seeks organization; and if we liberal, congregational, independent Christians furnish the popular want with no Church, if others about us do not, then there is something back of and behind us, back of and behind the ages and all ecclesiastical history, that will furnish one. Romanism is moving straight onwards to one result, almost noiselessly, quite meekly in this country, to be the Church of Christendom. For this she is building her splendid Gothic piles, at due intervals, in all the land. Romanism, if nothing else will, will give the people a Church. Nothing, in the long run, can meet the Romish Church but the Unitarian Church; nothing can meet the false Church but the true Church; nothing can meet that which calls itself the Church but that which really is the Church; and I say, in face of all, let others call themselves as they may, we, the Unitarian body, are The Church.

Now understand me, my friends; I speak of nothing awful, arbitrary, dangerous to liberty, when I speak of the Church attitude that we would take. We are liberal, we are independent, we are congregational, we believe in humanity, we are resolved on progress, we labor in the highest ideas for the highest ideas. These are fundamental, unalterable, eternal principles; our Church shall be the organization of these great principles. Our fathers broke away from the English monarchical state; did they abandon the plan of a state? No. They had great principles of democratic freedom. They said, Let us organ-

ize these principles into a state. We, too, will have a state; we, too, will be a state. So they organized or constituted those great principles into a state. In other words, they formed a constitution embodying those principles, both for themselves and their posterity for ever. And as to themselves, and all that they had to do with, they were the State. In this section of the country they said, "We do hereby agree to form ourselves into a free and independent state, by the style and title of the State of Maine." What I ask is, what the time has come for is, what God demands is, that free and independent Christians as we are, — we, and all in all parts who agree with us, form ourselves into a free and independent church, by the style and title of the Church of God and Christ, the Liberal Church, the Unitarian Church of Maine.

What should be the idea of The Church? All that which, in the State, liberty expresses. In a republican, democratic state, the Church should be republican and democratic. It should have no creed but the Bible, no ultimate head but Christ. Its bond should be the Holy Spirit, its sentiment fraternization, its purpose perfection of our being, its duration everlasting. Already we have the materials of such a Church, — ideas matured, many a sacred tradition to be incorporated into it, thinking and earnest men and women, consecrated edifices, pastors duly ordained.

My friends, I call upon you all to awaken to some thoughts upon and some endeavors after that grandest of human organizations, the Church. Disabuse

your minds of prejudices and errors ; and while embracing the conception, devote yourselves to the actualization of the Church. We want that deep feeling in the heart which says, I love thy Church, O Lord ! You do say, all of you say, the children say, I love my home, I love my country. I want a sentiment which says, I love my Church. I want some of our young men who are thinking of college and an education to say, I will devote myself to the Church, I will become a minister of Jesus Christ, I cast my lot, I fulfil my destiny, in that great divine organization of which Christ is the Head, and where apostles and martyrs are my predecessors.

Again, I want so much Church feeling that men of wealth will so love the Church as to bestow more of their means upon it. I need not soften matters ; the simple fact is, the Church, as an organization, in all its ramifications and modes, needs money, just as much as the State or the Family needs it. It is just as right and proper that a man of his abundance should give abundantly to the Church, as that he should to the Family or the State. We give voluntarily to the Family and to the Church, and by taxation, by a species of compulsion, if you will, to the State ; but the principle is the same. Every man of us ought to consider his church tax or church subscription just as binding, just as promptly to be attended to, and as much a part of his indispensable yearly outlay, as any other necessary expense.

Then, again, I want our men of leisure to devote themselves more to the Church, to the thought of the Church, to the consideration of what the Church is

and should be, to laboring for the Church, to extending its influence, to deepening its purity and power, to looking after its minor wants, its buildings, its furniture. See, here is a man out of business. He has leisure and means; he hardly knows what to do with himself; he reads newspapers, frequents political meetings, and affects many things. Let that man devote himself to the Church, feel that the Church is a thing to be interested in, feel how vast is its scope, how infinite its bearings. How the old Romanists, men, women, and children, loved their Church, and what a Church they made of it! how their painters painted for it, and their musicians composed for it, and their architects planned for it! what beautiful, what gorgeous needlework their women wrought for it! Look once a month between this city and Hallowell or Gardiner, of a Sunday, and see the Romanists, youths and children, old men and maidens, — in winter snows, or mire of March, or heat of midsummer, — trudging afoot to their church in this city! What is the reason? There are many, but the underlying reason is, they have a Church, they all belong to it, its history is theirs, its hopes are theirs; in all its majesty, in all its promise, the Church of Rome fills each little boy's, each little girl's heart, as a part of their own being. Hence it is so difficult ever to proselyte them away from their Church. They are all *baptized into it* in infancy; it becomes their very essence; they grow into its image. Hence none of our Protestant revivals, no Protestant propagandism, can ever touch a Roman Catholic. If Romanism, with all its errors and wrongs, can build

up such a Church, what cannot Unitarianism, or pure Christianity, do, if we will but set about it in the right way? You say, we have not the authority that Church pretends to exercise. True; neither has democracy the power of monarchy. But can we not on a democratic basis rear as glorious and goodly a state in this country as they have in Great Britain or Austria? So on a Unitarian or Liberal basis we can rear as glorious and goodly a Church as any the world has seen.

The true Church, the Unitarian Church if you will, wants painters, musicians, architects, — in a word, it desires that genius and art should devote themselves to the Church, as well as to the State or the Family. See how comprehensive is that word, "The Church." It stands for the glorious body in all worlds of which Christ, under God, is the head; this primarily. But next, it stands for a collection of Christian people; it stands for people organized into a pastorate or parish; it stands for worship, or people met for worship; it stands for the ordinances, and for the building or house in which such people meet; finally, it is a collective idea, and represents in one word the whole of these things.

I have said that there is an instinct of the Church, as much as an instinct of the State or the Family, a sort of appetency for the highest organization of the highest truths; a desire of fellowship and communion in the highest society; and the Church in all ages and everywhere represents this organization, and men are not satisfied out of it, and mean some time to be in it. Yet, in this country, the

instinct of the State is fast superseding that of the Church; in other words, religion yields to politics. This was the case with those of whom I spoke; it is the case everywhere. I ask you again, these middle and mature aged men, if you are willing to give your freshness and energy, the meridian of your days, the flood of your being, to the State, and only reserve a few last ebbing pulsations of penitence and submission for the Church? Will the Church be content with only that? I say, the true Church will not. Of course, it will receive a man at the eleventh hour. But it wants your vigor, it would embrace the full circle of your days, while, at the same time, it would coöperate and sympathize with you in all rightful ends.

Are Roman Catholics the Church? are the Russians the Church? are Episcopalians or Methodists the Church? Are little companies, gathered exclusively within the various religious societies, the Church? To me, to us, they are not. They may call themselves so, they may think so, if they will; that is their concern, not mine. To me, to us, there can be no church, except that which has Christ for its head and the Gospel for its creed; none but that in which humanity and nature and reason are recognized; none but a liberal and progressive one. Therefore, to ourselves, we are the Church; for us there is, there can be, no higher. Are you prepared for this sentiment? Can you respond to it, "We are the Church." For one, here I stand; and if there be but three others in the wide world to stand by me, here I stand and say, We are the

Church. If this be not so, if there be aught higher than we, if there be aught that is the Church more than we, then this parish is as nothing, these walls and worship are nothing, then the whole thing of Liberal Christianity is nothing.

No, but to us the whole thing of Liberal Christianity, of a pure and unadulterated Christianity, is every thing. Where the organization of that is must be to us The Church; there can be no other. We do not want, we will not have, nor be, a partial, or sectarian, or a narrow, or a bigoted church. We will have a church where the profoundest philosophy and science can worship and commune, where the largest humanity can worship and commune, where the highest intelligence and reason can worship and commune. There is a religious element in science, in humanity, in reason, but these are all out of the sympathy of the Church; that is, the so-called churches do not recognize their affinity, and men of science, as such, worship in no church. Yet they seek the fellowship of God and truth, and we will give it to them. I have already said that our statesmen are out of the Church. The Church has no dignity in their eyes, compared with the State. Its creeds, to a multitude of minds, are a set of old wives' fables, its sanctity a species of tallow-faced imbecility, its mysteries a contrivance to beguile weak minds.

We can have a true Church; God is calling us to restore the beauty of Zion. We can resolve ourselves into the Church; we can covenant with God and Christ, with reason and nature, to be theirs for

ever. We can have a Church into the fellowship of which all great and pure minds, as well as all weak and tender ones, shall love to enter, — a Church to which knowledge, hope, progress, and all possibilities of humanity shall flock as clouds, and doves to their windows; a Church honored and respected by the world; a Church, my friends, where we may be happy together, where we may commune together, where our highest and best desires may be satisfied together; a Church that shall be as an open door to us into the skies, where, when we go hence, we shall meet those who have gone before us; a Church where the Holy Spirit will for ever dwell, in which Christ is, and under and around and over which is God our Heavenly Father.

S E R M O N V I I .



THE CHURCH HEREDITABLE.

THE PROMISE IS UNTO YOU, AND TO YOUR CHILDREN.—
Acts ii. 39.

IN a discourse a few months since, I undertook to show that children sustain, primarily and fundamentally, a birth-relation to the Church. I now say, in continuation of the subject, that the children are included in the covenant of the Church; that no church-covenant is complete that does not include the children; that it is not only not complete, but radically and fatally defective; that this was the original economy of God in the arrangement of human relations, the foundation laid by God in nature for the perpetuity of the principal institutions of the race; that this was the principle that entered into the construction of the primitive Church. I affirm, moreover, that there is no other practicable theory of the Church; no other tenable or rational or Scriptural ground on which to place it.

The Church is not a Masonic Fraternity or an Odd Fellows' Lodge, into which one adult man is

elected, and from which another adult man is rejected; the benefits of which only accrue to the member during his lifetime, and do not pass over to his children. It is, in the strong language of the Bible, a heritage; its dignity and honor, its law and constitution, its rights and ceremonies, its duties and its responsibilities, descend from parent to child even so long as there shall remain a seed on the earth. It is not a business partnership, nor an association for moral improvement, nor a meeting of an evening; it expresses the eternal form of human beings in that eternal relation to the worship of God, communion with Christ, and everlasting progress of the soul. By hereditary, I mean this: that as our political constitution descends from the fathers to the sons, so does that of the Church; as the peculiar principles that govern us as a nation descend from father to son, so do those of the Church; as the whole thing that we call the State is transmitted, so is the whole of that called the Church. Just, too, as this church edifice is an inheritance from our fathers, and we shall transmit it to our sons, so is all that which this edifice symbolizes,—Christian truth, worship, liberty, progress, unity, immortality.

I affirm, that the analogy of all history of all times and places and subjects, favors the view herein expressed. For instance, in ancient Greece, where the Church and State were one, or where the administration of public religious and political affairs was under one general direction, both Church and State were hereditary; in other words, the children were born into one as much as into the

other ; the covenant of the fathers included the children ; each generation took up the prevailing institutions where the preceding one left them, and possibly carried them to greater perfection. The form of recognition at Athens was a simple registry of names, and this was done three times ; first, in the year of birth ; second, at the age of eighteen ; the third, at twenty ; all the rights of citizenship and church-membership simultaneously and in due order of time accruing. No Athenian could be deprived of any religious privilege unless he had been convicted of some great offence. The same is true of Rome, and indeed of every country the history of which has reached us. The form among the Romans was a change of dress. Young people wore a gown bordered with purple, called the *toga prætexta* ; at the age of sixteen they put on the *toga virilis*, or manly gown, which was also called *toga pura*, because it was purely white. These seasons of registry among the Greeks, and of change of apparel among the Romans, were solemnized by religious observance. In these, as in other instances to which we might refer, there was a period of infancy and minority, and of majority or manhood. But the essential point was birth and age. In the Church, as in the State, there is perhaps what may be termed a minor membership and a major membership.

But I wish now to inquire more particularly what the Bible teaches on this subject, and what is God's revealed will. And first I shall ask attention to the Abrahamic covenant, which gave a character to the whole Jewish history, and from which also Chris-

tianity derives a certain complexion. We read in the book of Genesis, that God said unto Abraham, "Behold, I make my covenant with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations, and I will establish my covenant between me and thee, *and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and thy seed after thee.*" This was the token of the covenant, that every man-child at eight days old should be circumcised. Here is the foundation or beginning of what for the sake of convenience may be called the Abrahamic Church, or Abrahamic State, or Abrahamic dispensation. This was before Christ, about the year 2000. Here was a solemn covenant, communion, fellowship, between Abraham and God. *And all the children, as fast as they were born, were born into it; and at eight days old they were circumcised as the seal of their membership.* These few words express the theory and the fact of the whole Jewish economy. To Abraham Isaac was born, and he was included in the covenant or Church; to Isaac succeeded Jacob, and so on. There is no halting, no intermission, no questioning.

After about four hundred years Moses led the Israelites, the Abrahamic Church, out of Egypt, and, with some additions to their laws, rites, and customs, they were established in the land of Canaan. But the rule of succession and the rite of recognition underwent no change. The Abrahamic Church was hereditary. These Israelites are called a holy people, a kingdom of priests, and also saints. They are said to be sanctified, and this in anticipation, this of

children yet to be born, of generations that only in the way of nature would be connected with what had gone before them. All this is true and plain. I do not know that anybody doubts it, I do not know that anybody misunderstands it. You may ask how those as yet unborn, who had done neither good nor evil, could be called holy. The fact is, they were so called. God himself did not hesitate to predicate holiness of all the children of those included in his covenant with Abraham. "Ye shall be to me," he says, "a holy nation." "All the congregation is holy, every one of them." "Ye are the children of the Lord your God." The presumption was, that every child was holy; holy according to the standard of Judaism, until the contrary was proved; just as under our state economy every citizen is presumed to be honest and innocent until the contrary is proved. In the Abrahamic or Jewish Church, provision was made against transgression, as is done in our political state. If a man violated the law of God, he was to be dealt with. So if a man violates the law of the land, he is dealt with. The result was, that all the Jewish men, women, and children were in the Jewish Church; the majority, the masses, the people, were there; the exception being here and there one who had been cut off.

Now, whether this was well, or wise, or judicious, it was just what God, so far as he had any connection with Judaism, wished should be. It was what he expressly ordered, and so to say, stipulated for. We are shut up to this conclusion, that God, in arranging the economy of the Church, so arranged it

that it should be hereditary; placed it on this basis and no other; excluded every other basis, that he might put it on this. True, the Jews were not always faithful to their God, their covenant, and their Church. And they suffered severely for their sins and follies. But what was it that brought them back to fidelity? It was the remembrance of the responsibility they were under to their God, their covenant, and their Church. These responsibilities never left them in all their declensions and backslidings; and their covenant relation to God was ever urged upon them as a motive to virtue and perfection. So far our way is clear.

Two thousand years elapse, and Christ appears. Now I desire to ask, if the economy, purpose, or plan of God respecting his Church changed; changed, I mean, in the particular of which I am speaking? Doubtless there were changes. Moses is changed for Christ, Judaism for Christianity, universal worship succeeds worship at Jerusalem, universal love national love; God enters into a new covenant, or relation, with his children. We leave the Jewish Church and enter the Christian Church. But has the law of succession changed? Is not the Church still hereditary? If there be a change, I know no evidence of it, I can find not one particle of evidence of it. Can any man direct me where I shall find even the first hint of such alteration? Indeed, there is no such evidence; indeed, the testimony, as I shall presently show, is all the other way. The covenant blessings of God seem to have been confined hitherto to the Jewish nation. Christ comes and scatters

these blessings over the world. A stream of Divine favor seems to have been flowing through Judea, and when it reached the borders of that land to have stopped, and, as it were, risen very high. Christ comes and breaks down the gates, and lets the waters of life flow over all people. His ministration includes, not merely the lineal descendants of Abraham, who had often proved themselves unworthy of everlasting life, but Greek and Roman, Barbarian and Scythian. Christ would establish a universal Church; God, he says, will enter into covenant with all races, and I am the mediator of the New Covenant. Believe in me, he says, and accept the promise God makes through me. The seal of the old covenant was in the flesh, the new one is in the heart; the old law was written on tables of stone, the new one in the mind. Believe this to be true that I tell you. It is glad tidings, it is the Gospel, and you, John and Peter, go and proclaim the glad tidings. The old law, or "the law," as it is concisely called, the law of Moses, was defective; it said, An eye for an eye; the new law says, Nay, resist not evil; the old law said, Kill your enemies; the new, Love them; the old said, Salvation is of the Jews; the new, Salvation is for all; the old law made the body holy; the new makes the spirit holy.

There were great interior differences between Christ and Moses, between the Christian Church and the Jewish Church, but were there administrative differences? Was not the rule of succession the same? Did not the children of the Christian Church inherit the Christian Church? The covenant with

Abraham was hereditary in its operations. And I ask you particularly to observe, that this covenant was for *all nations*. Yet for two thousand years it was confined to one nation, the Israelites. Now when Christ came with his liberal, human, cosmopolitan purposes, when he came to open the door of the true Church to all men, the Jews, or their teachers and chiefs, took umbrage, and for this cause perhaps more than any other they compassed his death. Even the Jewish Christians could not for a long while get over their feeling of exclusiveness. Salvation is of the Jews, was a sentiment ever ringing in their ears, and blazing before their imaginations. Hence a dispute, and in settling this dispute you get a key to all of Paul's Epistles. In the light of the question now agitated, these Epistles of Paul become luminous and beautiful.

Paul says, God made a covenant with Abraham, for all nations; and the promise, the old, original promise, was, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. But hitherto only the Jewish nation has been blessed. But Christ has come, argues the Apostle, who is the seed of Abraham, and in him now all nations are to be blessed. Everybody, anywhere, Jew or Greek, who believes Christ, and accepts the great principles he inculcates, enters into the covenant of the promise, and is a child of God. So far all is clear. But I ask attention to this:—Paul claimed that the old covenant made with Abraham two thousand years before was fulfilled, completed, or rather, fully carried into execution, by Christ. But the Jews, or the Judaistic Christians,

said, See here : we have a law ; it was given by Moses four hundred years after the time of Abraham ; it prescribes circumcision, sundry washings, new moons, sabbath-days, various rites and ordinances, — in other words, quite a variety of outward works ; and we insist that that law remains, and is binding ; and, even if one does become a disciple of the Nazarene, he must still keep the law. Very well, Paul says, then you are going to make all men Jews ; you will have them all circumcised, and he that is debtor to any part of the law is debtor to the whole ; and there is no possible escape for any man. But the original covenant with Abraham included all nations, and your law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul the covenant before confirmed of God in Christ, to be ultimately accomplished in Christ. In plain words, Paul says salvation has come to the GENTILES. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, your law, — from the curse denounced on such as violate it ; we have nothing more to do with it ; and all, that the blessings covenanted to Abraham might come upon the Gentiles. In a word, according to Paul, the Abrahamic covenant is not only fulfilled, but, as it were, revived, and truly developed in Christianity. This too, I believe, is generally admitted. But the great point back of all this is wholly lost to view, that the original Abrahamic covenant and Abrahamic Church included the children, was hereditary.

This fundamental principle, I argue, underwent no change. The Christian covenant and the Christian Church, however in other things it may differ

from the other, must in this agree with it, that it also includes the children. There is a difference, a change in an important particular; circumcision was the seal or token of the Abrahamic covenant; while, with most pedobaptists, baptism takes the place of circumcision. But circumcision was the sign that the child was in the bosom and fellowship of the Abrahamic Church, as a minor, indeed, at first, but afterwards as a major; and why should not baptism be a seal or token that a child is in the Christian Church? I know that infant baptism nowhere among the sects that we are most familiar with is so regarded.

I insist that as God did with Abraham, so also he did with Christ, establish a covenant with him and his seed after him, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant. And the seed of Christ are those who believe in him. Peter, in the text, emphatically declares, "The promise is unto you, and to your children." This, then, is my first direct argument from Scripture for maintaining that the Church is hereditary, or includes the children, — the connection that St. Paul declares to subsist between the Abrahamic and the Christian covenant.

2. Another reason for the same view is this: Christ is made the heir of all things. The inheritance which had been in the hand of Abraham or Moses, now passes into that of Christ. But we are joint heirs with Christ, or we are heirs of God in Christ, not Abraham, and our children inherit with us of very necessity. An inheritance is of course hereditary. This new dispensation, this new covenant, this that we call the Christian Church, the in-

heritance that the Apostle speaks of, is hereditary. "We have an inheritance in the kingdom of God"; "in Christ we have obtained an inheritance." (Eph. i. 11.) "We are heirs according to the promise." Judaism had been the inheritance, the Jews were heirs, and they thought themselves sole heirs. No, Paul says; and here was the point which was a mystery to the Jewish mind, and which — not the Incarnation, not the Trinity — is the mystery of the Gospel, that "the Gentiles too should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of God's promise in Christ; which in other ages (in the times of Isaac, and Moses, and David) was not made known unto the sons of men, but is now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." (Eph. iii. 5, 6.) Of course, then, I say, as the Jews and their descendants had been heirs of the original covenant, and all its rights and privileges, so are we and ours, in all senses of the word, heirs under the new dispensation. "And if we are Christ's, we are Abraham's seed, [as really as the Jews,] and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. iii. 29.)

Paul's idea seems to have been something of this sort, that God really entered into covenant with Abraham, not for the Jews only, but for all the world, and all time; but that the Jews had somehow monopolized the covenant till Christ came, who restored its true meaning, and applied it to its true use, that of distribution equally among all the races of men. Hence he says what I have just quoted, If we are Christ's, we are verily Abraham's seed, and

heirs according to the promise originally made to the patriarch.

3. My third argument for a hereditary Church, or that the children of the Church belong to the Church, is found in the express declaration of Scripture. Our text would seem to be decisive, — “The promise is unto you, and to your children.” This is said immediately after the ascension, when the disciples began to adjust themselves to their great work, and is spoken to the Jews for the purpose of winning them to the new covenant. But its intent cannot be mistaken. It is the Christian promise; or, if you please, it is the old Abrahamic promise now revived in Christ. But the point before us is, it is for “the children.” It is the same language God had employed in all ages, and its import could not have been misunderstood, that God would covenant with them for their children, or for their children in them.

There is this remarkable passage: “The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.” (1 Cor. vi. 14.) The Jews were called holy because they were a covenant people of God; their children were deemed holy because they were included in the same covenant. The conclusion is irresistible, that, inasmuch as the children of believing parents are declared by the Apostle to be holy, they must of necessity be included in the Christian covenant.

The case is this. The Bible, in the Old Testament, *presumes* all Jews to be holy, and their children with them: “Ye shall be to me a holy nation”;

“ Every male child shall be called holy to the Lord.” In the New Testament, it presumes all Christians to be holy, as Paul calls them holy brethren, holy women, elect of God and holy, and their children with them. If *holy* here means consecrated to God, it means that the children, as well as the parents, are consecrated. Not but that Jews and Christians, parents and children, may sin, as we know they did sin. I say the fact may be that they sin, but the *presumption* in the Bible is that the children of good parents will be good. Just as, in the United States, the presumption is that the people are republicans and lovers of liberty, although there may be people here who are monarchical in principle. This presumption covers the children. In a Mohammedan country, the presumption is that all the people are temperate, and that the children will grow up into temperance, and be consecrated to total abstinence. Yet the fact may possibly be that some drink wine and strong liquors. We are obliged to presume one thing or the other, and address ourselves accordingly. The passage last quoted presumes the children of believers to be believers, minor believers, and deals with them as such. There are presumptive heirs to the throne of an empire, and they are always addressed and treated as such, even though they may die, or rebel, or abjure their country long before the expected place is vacant.

4. My fourth argument is drawn from the language of Christ touching children, and his manner of treating them. Christ came to renew the covenant of God with man; he came to gather into one

those that were near and those that were afar off; he came, if you please so to say, to form a Church, a true Church. Had he any regard to the children? If so, what? Did his scheme include them? Did his own heart embrace them? He commanded parents to bring them to him, he took them into his arms, he blessed them; and thus, as it would appear, signalized his entering into everlasting covenant with them. He declared, Of such is the kingdom of heaven. The phrase kingdom of heaven, or of God, so often used by Christ, does not refer directly to the life beyond the grave, but rather to this; or I may say it refers to that through this. The immediate kingdom of God which Christ had in mind was to be developed here on the earth. It means, however we view it, at least as much as the word Church. I think it stood to Christ's mind as synonymous with the goodly Church he would plant and foster in all the world. If, then, children belong to the Christian kingdom of God, they certainly belong to the Christian Church. When Paul says, "The children of a believer are holy," he says no more than Christ affirmed, that "they are of his kingdom." It does not admit of a doubt that the purposes, scheme, economy, and whole heart of Christ, comprehended the children. How he yearned and agonized for such a result! "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered *thy children* together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!" This may mean the whole people of the city, but it certainly must signify the little children also. "Forbid them not to come unto me." We

are not to throw the least obstacle in the way of the smallest child borne in its mother's arms entering into the covenant of God in Christ; it must be consecrated, dedicated, to God, to Christ; and if so consecrated or dedicated, it of course belongs to his Church. The idea of a child coming to Christ, and being declared to be of his kingdom, and being blessed by him, — and not being in his Church, still remaining outside of his Church, and being, as we say, in the world, a stranger from the covenants of promise, — is a simple absurdity, a monstrosity.

5. My fifth argument comes from the way in which the Apostles, after Christ, or, as we sometimes say, the Apostolic Church, treated children. There are the declarations already cited; first, that of Peter, made upon the very introduction of himself to mankind as a Christian minister, — “The promise is unto you, and to your children”; second, that of Paul, who takes it for granted, a thing which nobody doubted or ever thought of bringing into dispute, that the children of believers were holy. And, in reviewing the action of the Apostolic Church, we must not disregard the final injunction of Christ to his disciples, “Go, teach all *nations*, baptizing them,” &c. It is well argued that nations must include the children of a nation. I am not now speaking of baptism, as an external rite. I have little doubt, the real, deep, efficacious baptism that Christ meant was a spiritual baptism. I am not now inquiring whether infants ought to receive water-baptism. The point is, whether, with or without baptism, the children of the Church belong to the Church. Whether, indeed,

baptism here means spiritual influences or water applications, and whether, as most suppose, it is a token of the Christian covenant and a seal of church-membership, or not, whichever way we look at it, it would seem to include the children. Lydia was baptized, and her household, or family. Paul baptized the household or family of Stephanas. I am not going to affirm there were children in these households. The *presumption* is, there were; at any rate, the whole family, more or less, great and small, became of the Christian Church. Paul uses this language: Salute the church that is in such or such a house, or family. The house or family, parents and children, were accounted as constituting the church. The jailer at Philippi believed and was baptized, with all his house. The Baptists say, there could have been no infants in that family, for infants cannot believe. I will not commit the folly of saying the jailer believed for his children, if he had any. I do say, this father, as every father ought to do, accepted Christ as the Saviour, Shepherd, Divine Head of himself and his children, — accepted Christianity as the religion of himself and family, and took all his little ones with him, and all that should be born unto him, into the new covenant; and if there was a babe of but a day old, he said to Paul, take that too, seal it with the great seal, it shall grow up into the faith of Jesus. Again, we read that a nobleman of Capernaum believed, with all his house, and that Cornelius feared God, with all his house. We have a dozen or more instances in which the house, the entire family, is most sacredly connected with the great

movement Christ and the Apostles were starting in the world. Now those have undertaken a very hard work, who shall convince me, or anybody, that there were no little children in those families. The presumptions, the known facts of all time, are against such a notion. I shall claim there were children there, until the contrary is proved.

Well, these children were included in whatever included the parents, whether we call it the Church, or the new covenant, or the Christian system, or what not. So Christ says, "This day is salvation come to this house." To show this church connection of the children, the Apostles use this language of spiritual affection and Christian fellowship: "Salute them that are of Aristobulus's household; greet them that be of Narcissus's household." Of course, here is implied the Christian and church fraternization and communion of the children. Into whatever house the Apostles entered, they were directed by their Master to say, Peace be to this house; peace, harmony, love, benediction, Christian harmony, love, benediction; this was to be their first salutation, first address. Again, when the disciples sold their possessions, when they continued with one accord in the temple, when they went daily from house to house, breaking bread,—men and women, fathers and mothers,—in the nature of the case, they must have had their children with them.

I pass now to the direct mention of children. John writes to a church sister thus: "The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth." He closes in these words: "The children of

thy elect sister," that is, the children of my wife, my own children, "greet thee." Again, he says, "I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth." Christianity gradually formed itself into an institution; it developed itself in what I have called the organization of the Christian religious element, in other words, The Church. As we say of our meetings, of any sort, it came to order. It had its officers, its bishops or pastors, and its deacons; and we trace at once an intimate church connection between these church officers and their children. The bishop or pastor and the deacon are to rule well their own houses and children, having them in subjection with all gravity or soundness. They are directed to have faithful children, children of the Christian faith. Then Paul wills that the younger Christian or church women marry and bear children. These same women, now embraced in the new covenant, are also exhorted to love their husbands and their children. By and by the Apostles meet these assembled Christian families, that gradually expand into a more universal Church, and see how he addresses them all alike. Parents, he says, love your children; children, obey your parents in the Lord, i. e. Christ; as Christian children, as included in the new covenant, as members of a common household of faith. So he says, Wives, as we now say, Christian wives, church wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands; husbands, Christian husbands, cherish and nourish your wives even as your own flesh, for so Jesus cherisheth and nourisheth the Church. In a word, the whole household, children and all, is now presumed

to be a Christian household, and are all gathered into the Church together, and are all spoken to and treated as component parts of one great spiritual communion.

The principle is, that if the parents are believers, or if one parent is a believer, the children are holy. Or, as Solomon expresses it, "The just man walketh in his integrity; his children are blessed after him." Where the Apostle is writing to one of these entire communities, recently formed, as in the Epistle to the Ephesians, for instance, we find it addressed to the saints at Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus, "which does at least mean," argues Dr. Bushnell, "that the Epistle is addressed to *Christian brethren*. And among these, '*children*' are directly addressed in the same way as other members of the fraternity. The same is true in the Epistle to the Colossians, wherein we see children familiarly recognized with their parents among the *adult* Christian disciples, and addressed in the second person, with as little thought of impropriety as the adults themselves." I submit, without further citation, that, in the Apostolic times, wherever you look, in all that is expressed by the words Church arrangements, Church privileges, Church distinctions, Church responsibilities, the children were included. I do not know nor care whether Lydia had children or not; the whole spirit of the system then taking its rise in the world includes the children. The Church which we see the Apostles devoting themselves to erect was not a Masonic Fraternity, or Odd Fellows' Lodge; it was like the State, or Commonwealth; it

was indeed a new, divine Christian state and commonwealth, in which the promise was to them and to their children. The Apostles labored wholly in the spirit of the old covenant with Abraham, that God was making a covenant with those first believers and their seed after them, to be a God to them and their seed for ever. I may say more; the people of those times knew no other way of doing things; God, I may say, had trained the mind of the generations to no other modes of thinking; to no other forms of action. A man leaving Judaism or Paganism, and embracing the doctrine of Jesus, on entering the Church, took his wife and children with him, feeling that God had set his sanctuary in the midst of them, that he should dwell therein, and his children, and his children's children, for ever. Than this idea of separating parents from children in the fellowship of the Church, perhaps you could conceive nothing more revolting to the whole Oriental mind, Jewish or other, which always cherished with extremest sacredness the parental and filial ties, and studied to secure the highest blessings to the children.

My last — argument, I was about to say, but the subject is beyond argument, it has the force of foregone sentiment and conviction, — the last illustration of the great truth I have endeavored to set forth is found in the action of the Christian Church, immediately subsequent to the era of the Apostles. The records of that period are few, but all corroborative of the same general view. Among the earliest Christian gravestones is one commemorative of a little child; it is inscribed thus: "Here lies Zosimus, a

faithful, descended of faithfuls, aged two years, one month, and twenty-five days." Here, as in a picture, the whole thing is seen. That little child was in the covenant of its parents. It was a believer, descended from believers. Gregory Nazianzen, one of the earliest of the Christian Fathers, particularly commends his mother, that "not only was she herself consecrated to God, and brought up under a pious education, but that she *conveyed it down as a necessary inheritance* to her children." Clement of Alexandria describes a primitive Christian family in these words: "The mother is the theme of the children's praise, the wife is the theme of her husband's praise, while God is the theme of the united praise of all." (Neander, p. 175.) The same is expressed in their views about the future world: "There a vast multitude of them that are dear to us await us, a multitude of parents, of brothers, of children." As the "Passover had been the fundamental covenant feast of the Mosaic religion, and children partook of it, so the Lord's Supper became the fundamental covenant feast of the Christian religion, and the children partook of it." (Neander.) We even find parents frequently giving the sacred emblems to their own children. I do not know as it admits of question, that, in the first ages of the Church, the children of believers were all considered as of the Church; I mean prior to the fourth century, which is the beginning of the great Dark Age of our era. At a later period, children were received into the Church: not in consequence of birth however, but solely by baptism.

The doctrine of Total Depravity had sprung up, and this at once unchurched, unchristianized, and condemned all children. But there was not wanting a remedy for this difficulty; the notion was conceived that the water of baptism regenerated the child; and so children recovered their standing in the Church through baptism. An unbaptized infant was out of the Church, out of the covenant of grace, out of heaven, and, as St. Augustine unequivocally taught, was damned to everlasting perdition.

Such is the doctrine, my friends, and these are its proofs. Such is a portion of my own implicit faith. Nor is the view here advanced without confirmation; and that, too, from a source rather unexpected. First, Dr. Bushnell's book on Christian Nurture is really founded on the doctrine I have endeavored to unfold. He does not say as much as I do, or speak so plainly, but the same train of thought runs all through what he has written. The object of his book is to show, in his own words, "that the child is to grow up a Christian." That too I believe. He lays no substantial basis for such a belief; that I have endeavored to do.

A further confirmation is afforded in a little book, entitled "The Baptized Child," by the Rev. Nehemiah Adams, of Essex Street Church, Boston, a Calvinist. Mr. Adams says, speaking of Christ blessing little children, "If Christ referred to the Church on earth, infants have in his view a *certain relation* to that Church; and this relation may have such meaning and benefit in it, that, if they die in infancy, they are transferred to heaven." Infants,

then, have a relation to the Church. What relation? Such that, if they die, they go to heaven. This is a pleasant way of avoiding the real point, or of not exactly saying what one thinks. That relation is, that infants are in and of the Church. Again, Mr. Adams uses this very strong, very significant language: "Children were formerly included with their parents in promises and threatenings, blessings and curses. *This is a principle in the government of the world*; and when God revived his Church in Abraham, this principle came into view; and the admission of children into covenant with their parents was grafted upon it. *It has its foundation in our nature, and cannot cease but with the parental relation.* So that the question which some ask, 'Whether the Abrahamic covenant is abolished,' is lost in the question, Has that principle of the Divine government ceased, upon which God formerly included the children of believers in his covenant with their parents?" Has that principle ceased,—a principle in the government of the world, founded in our nature, and which cannot cease? Mr. Adams is apparently in a dilemma, and discordant with himself. He says the principle cannot cease. But as if this were saying too much, he asks if it can cease. This question he does not answer. But a more important, a more momentous question, has not been propounded to the American churches. Mr. Adams, however, does say that he considers it "a great principle in God's government of the world, which existed even before the Abrahamic covenant, and will last to the end of time," that there is "a nat-

ural connection of children with their parents in the divine constitution," in other words, the Church. This really expresses the whole idea, and all I have said,—that there is a natural connection, a birth-relation, an inherited right, of children to the Church; or that the children of the Church, by "a natural connection," belong to the Church.

Again, Mr. Adams says, "God, at baptism, receives the child into the number of those to whom He stands in a peculiar relation"; that is, in plain words, into the Church, according to the Calvinistic view of it. He adds, that parents, when they join the Church, must avouch Jehovah to be the God and portion of *their children*," a thing I never saw done anywhere. He says again, "If God has not in any manner signified his will that the admission of children into covenant with him through their parents should cease,—and this we nowhere find that he has done,—the baptized child is of course received into special relation to God." Here Mr. Adams wellnigh asserts, what it has been one object of this discourse to prove, that the principle involved in the Abrahamic covenant has never ceased. Need I say any thing more? Will any one question the soundness of my views. Yet here in New England the principle has ceased, practically ceased everywhere. Mr. Adams, addressing the baptized child, says, and underscores the words, "*God looks upon you as His child*, your parents gave you to Him when you were baptized." Mr. Adams says, the pious Israelite had great comfort in the fact that his children were included in the covenant; and he

adds, "If believers now do not enjoy this privilege,"—they certainly do not,— "they are deprived of a great blessing, and that too under a dispensation which professes to be superior to that which is past, in the richness of its blessings." He continues, "This privilege is not restricted to one age or dispensation; it grows out of the *natural relation* of parents and children. When God would mark by a peculiar token the covenant made by Him with believers, He selected the *natural affection of parents for their children*, and as it were sanctified or set apart this instinct, to be a sign between Him and them." Mr. Adams, in these extracts, does not appear consistent. He at one time makes the connection of children with the Church turn on *baptism*, and at another he says this relation has its foundation in *nature*, the "*natural connection* of children with their parents in the divine constitution." The idea and import of baptism I shall by and by recur to. I am now simply asking, What is the foundation of the children's relation to the Church? *It is not baptism*; that is another thing. I conceive it to be, as Mr. Adams again and again admits that it is, the same as it is in the state and the family, *the natural connection between parents and children*.

I have a few explanations to make. I have used the word *hereditary*. I think I am not misunderstood. *I do not mean that personal character is hereditary*, I do mean that *that which is potent in forming personal character is hereditary*. *I do not mean that virtue is hereditary*, I do mean that *the supports and incentives to virtue are hereditary*. I do not mean

that regeneration is hereditary; I do mean that *the divine means and method of regeneration are hereditary*. I say the Church is hereditary, as I say the State is; and that there is no other foundation for the perpetuity of either. The Bible is hereditary, the Sabbath is hereditary. This that we call Christ Church is an heritage; this building, or some other in its place, we shall transmit by natural succession to our children, as we have received it from our fathers; this worship is conveyed in like manner, the influence of this church, its organic life, our principles, our truths, our liberality, the form and fashion of our thoughts, we likewise send down. In the State we inherit the constitution and laws, the rights and privileges of our fathers. In the State they designed that we should, they covenanted to this very extent. In the Church we have no such covenant. Both in State and Church, we often all live at the same time, old and young, parents and children, testators and heirs, to enjoy these blessings in common.

There are the terms *believers, Christians, the Church*, — how would I have them used? There is every shade of belief; all kinds of believers. I certainly do not mean by *believers* the little company, here or anywhere, who to-day may unite in the Lord's Supper. I trust they are believers; but there are more besides. The great majority of this congregation, as to the fundamental truths of Christianity, are believers, to the extent that all the duties and obligations of Christianity may be predicated of their belief. And that is belief enough for the true Church theory to proceed upon.

“*Christians,*” — who are Christians? I shall quote from the report made to the New York Legislature on a petition for abolishing all laws pertaining to the Sabbath; a report evidently suggested by Calvinistic clergy, and drawn up by Calvinistic laity. It says: “*This is a Christian nation. Ninety-nine hundredths, if not a larger portion of the population, believe in the general doctrines of the Christian religion; Christianity is the common and prevailing faith of the people, it is the common creed of the people.*” Now in whatever sense it be true that we are a Christian nation or a Christian people, just in that sense do all Christian responsibilities on the one hand, and Christian privileges on the other, belong to us. Just to that extent are we all, parents and children, included in the Christian covenant, just to that extent are we, as were the Jews, a holy people unto the Lord our God; whether the sense be loose or strict, high or low, it matters not, as to the argument before us.

“*Church,*” — how is that word to be understood by us in the practical application of this discourse? how the phrase, “The children of the Church belong to the Church”? Certainly not as an exclusive description of a small band of communicants, but as it is used in the declaration, “We are the Church”; meaning all who are willing to be embodied in that formula, whether they are communicants or not.

So important, my friends, do I deem the doctrine of this discourse, so unquestionable does the truth of it appear, so clearly is it revealed alike in all history, in nature, in Scripture, and the craving wants of our

best men, so clearly is it of God and a part of the Divine economy in the government of the world, that I could not, for a moment, consent to assume the pastorate of any church that did not recognize it. I do not think I magnify the subject under any immediate impressions of contact with it, or from any sort of idiosyncrasy of feeling or speculation; and I am disposed to say that no subject, or hardly any subject, can be proposed to the consideration, at least, of the New England churches, of magnitude and moment like this. It really underlies the whole matter of Christian nurture and general religious education; it underlies the whole matter of the method of a bishop or pastor with his people, and of the Church with whatever comes within its sphere. It is in itself a complete basis of church action towards the young. It determines the mode in which the Christian minister is to address his people, and the light in which he is to view them. Are the children in covenant with their parents, or out of covenant? That is the question we have got to meet. If they are in covenant, our duty to them is one thing; if out of covenant, our duty is quite another thing. If in the latter case, I do not say the children are actually different, but we look on them in wholly another light, they assume an opposite and contrasted phase.

You know how the case now is, — the children are generally out of covenant of the Christian Church. Does any evil result from this? Consult, if you will, Dr. Bushnell's book. He says, "Our children grow up in sin, artificially averse to religion. Our families are irresponsible," — and he might have added,

our churches are irresponsible. "Our piety is itself desiccated as it is undomesticated, and whatever progress we make is wrought by methods that are desultory and violent, and remote as possible from all the natural laws of character. In short, the mischiefs we suffer are too evident to be suffered longer. The day has come when God calls us to undertake a remedy." You know how it is, — the children of the Church are all out of the Church, out of the covenant; neither the privileges nor the duties of the Church or the covenant, or of Christ, are supposed to rest upon them. The idea is, that if we can specially convert, transmute, make over these children, then they can be taken into the Church and the covenant. And this idea practically prevails just as much in Unitarian churches as in any other. The notion has been branded into the American mind, that, to use the common phrase, one must meet with a change before he can enter the covenant, take upon himself the obligations of a Christian life, or even partake of the communion.

The doctrine of total depravity, I hardly need to say, is the fountain-head of all this notion. This doctrine at once unchurches the whole human race, as represented in a whole generation of children. The Romanists get over the difficulty by saying water regenerates. Our modern Calvinists see the absurdity of this, yet, still cleaving to total depravity, they only fall into deeper mire. Revivals are invoked to prevent the extinction of the Church. Dr. Bushnell sees evils enough in them. He does not strike at the root of the tree, he does not deny depravity, but

he strikes boldly for this: "We must educate the children into piety, we must treat them as in the covenant"; and he writes a book, devoted to prove this thesis: "That the child is to grow up a Christian." He says of his book, "It was like a fuse hissing from a bomb, that threw the whole State of Massachusetts into a general panic." Mr. Adams says, "God looks upon the baptized child as his child." Dr. Bushnell says, the child is in the Church, is presumptively regenerated. Paul says, the children of believers are holy.

Now the question, I grant, may not be a question of the absolute nature of the child, but this: "How shall we look upon children." If, as Mr. Adams says, God looks upon the baptized child as his child, certainly you and I may; if Dr. Bushnell may regard the child as presumptively regenerate, you and I may; if Paul regarded them as holy, so may we. Even leaving out the fact, *the presumption* in this case is every thing. The man whom I traffic with to-morrow morning may be a dishonest man; but I have to presume one thing, either that he is honest or dishonest, and it is of all consequence which course I take. One of you, professing to be my friend, may knowingly give me a counterfeit bank-bill; the presumption is, you will not. The Jews were not all holy, as Paul says, "For they are not all Israel that are of Israel"; they were presumptively holy. So after Christ, Christians and their descendants, from generation to generation, are presumptively holy.

This *presumption*, what does it amount to? I will

take Dr. Bushnell's illustration. You look upon a kernel of wheat; that kernel contains, presumptively, a thousand kernels of wheat; if planted, the presumption is, it will grow and bear fruit. There is, however, a possibility, owing to some fault of cultivation, or some speck of diseased matter in itself, it may never reproduce at all. He applies this to the Christian nurture of children. If properly trained, the presumption is, they will grow up Christians. So, if Christian parents were faithful, the presumption would be that ninety-nine hundredths of these children of America would be growing up Christians. So if the Christian Church embraced the children, the presumption would be that all the children of the Church would grow up Christians. What a truth is here for the consideration of these parents, and for our consideration as a Church!

Here comes in the doctrine, the only reasonable doctrine, of imputation. Imputation,—it means what the presumption is in regard to men, what the light in which we shall regard them. I have a friend at a distance; he is an educated, refined, virtuous, and honest man,—a Unitarian, if you please. He sends his son, whom I never saw or heard of, to me. Now I, instinctively, irresistibly, impute the character of that father to that son. I may be mistaken, but I look upon him in the light of his father. I somehow, without knowing any thing about the matter, presume him to be refined, virtuous, and honest, and a Unitarian, and I approach him, address him in this light. It is in this way the righteousness, the goodness, the virtues of Christ, are imputed to believers.

Now the Bible imputes the righteousness of Abraham to his descendants, and of Christ to his. In this sense Abraham becomes the federal head of the Jews, and Christ of Christians. Now granting that Adam fell, yet our relations are not with him. Abraham, and after him Christ, is our federal head.

We reach another great point. The children of the Church belong to the Church, but "we must be born again," we must have the spiritual birth! *Children are to be regenerated in the Church, and not out of it.* It is absurd to say a man must be regenerated out of the Church and then join it. It is like saying one must get an education and then begin to go to school. If Christ be in the Church, and he is in the true Church, if the Church be the body of Christ, then the place for the sinning man to find Christ is in the Church, and not out of it. If the true law, as Dr. Bushnell insists, is nurture, then the place to receive that nurture is in the Church, and not out of it. The Church, the true Church, is the mother of her children, and is to train and bring them up within herself, as the mother of a family. What would you think of a mother, who, as fast as her children were born, should send them out into the world, as it were disinherit them, say they were not of her home and heart, and yet say, As soon as my children become truly affectionate and kind, and full of filial duty, I will admit them to the house? This is the way the so-called churches are treating their children, and in fact losing them; it is only here and there they can get one back into the

Church from which in infancy they are so unnaturally excluded.

“ You want to get us all into the Church,” says some one. So I do, into the true Church, the Church of God and Christ, the Church of the universe, of humanity, of progress, of all that is lovely, beautiful, glorious. But suppose the child, as he grows up, becomes dissatisfied, and wants to leave? If he really wants to leave the true Church, I should be sorry for him. If he wants to leave any particular instance of that Church for some other, with prayers and blessings we should let him go. If he really wishes to fall back into the world, sin, and shame, why, he must do it, and we should leave him and the consequences with God.

In respect to the baptism of children I have but a word to say. It is the seal or token of their being in the Church; it is the outward impress of the covenant. The Jews circumcised their children, the Romans changed their dress, the Greeks registered their names, the Christian Church baptizes its children. It is a beautiful, an appropriate rite, hallowed by the usages of many ages, hallowed by all the associations of Christian sentiment. Some may say, We ourselves have not been baptized, we are not outwardly recognized as of the Church, and will you baptize our children? Yes, your children, as many as can be offered. Possibly you may be, unconsciously, members of the Church, and of course we should baptize your children. Perhaps you may be very wicked men, and most certainly we should baptize your children, because, on the very theory of our sub-

ject, if this is the true Church, it is anxious that its selectest influences should be about your children; it is anxious to take them into its own solemn covenant with God; it is anxious for their growth into Christianity, and it feels that within itself, certainly, if not in your family, the work of your children's regeneration and gracious advancement may go on. The Church, the true Church, would take the child of a wicked man into its communion and fellowship, just as quick as it would into its Sunday School. Nor is this with us a matter of sentiment or feeling, nor is it any finesse, or sectarian device; it is a matter of profoundest conviction, of most fundamental principle; it goes as deep as our theology or our Christianity goes, it is an incorporate part of the whole system of our religious faith and practice. Therefore we say to each of you who has an unbaptized child, Bring him to the altar, and if you have it not in your heart to consecrate him to God, and surrender him to the responsibilities and hopes of the Gospel, it is in the power of the Church to do it for you. If the believing wife sanctifies the husband, may we not judge that the believing child will retroactively sanctify the parents? If there be any adult persons who have not been baptized, we hope they will present themselves to receive that rite.

There is a secondary rite, known in the Romish and other churches as Confirmation; it is a period when the child, having arrived at years of discretion, takes upon itself the covenant of the Church and God. Dr. Bushnell suggests for our Congregational churches, that it be the rite of Assumption or Ac-

knowledge, as being an assuming or acknowledging the covenant. That rite in due time will be solemnized in this Church.

Recollect, in regard to the communion or sacrament of the Lord's Supper, it is not specially obligatory on a few individuals, who in technical phrase have joined the Church. There is a man, an excellent man, we presume, who keeps this ordinance; there is his wife, an excellent woman, she is under just the same obligations to keep it. Any man who, as Abraham did, believes in God, or who loves Christ, or feels that he is, in any sense, of the true Church, should deem it a privilege to participate in this celebration. Do we bind, does the true Church bind, any man's soul, or hinder his independence, or mesh his activities? God forbid. Every man here is free as God would have him be, free as his own nature virtuously developed would desire to be. Is he a scientific man? the Church goes with him into the vast domain of the universe. Is he a politician? the State is holy, and holily to be administered; the true Church is in harmony with the true State, and the Church blesses the State. The churchman and the statesman are in unity. The Church only asks of the State, what God asks, and nature asks, and humanity pleads for, that it would not sin. Does any one want to have recreation? God has given you that want, and the Church recognizes its sacredness, and the Church is just as willing her children should play, as she expects them to pray.

If the Church be that body of which God is the supreme head, and Christ the vital heart, and the

Holy Spirit the cementing element, then the Church is just as vast, as all-comprehensive, as liberal, as humane, as genial, as God and Christ and the Sacred Spirit are. If this Church be any feeble representative of the great, universal Church, then it combines within itself all these most exalted elements. If it be not the true Church, God forbid it should last another day; if it be not, God to-day help us to make it so.

Three thousand and eight hundred years ago, the Lord appeared to Abram in the plains of Mamre, and said unto him, "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect, and I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly." And Abram fell on his face.

SERMON VIII.



WE SEND CHILDREN TO HEAVEN, BUT DARE NOT
ADMIT THEM TO THE CHURCH.

JESUS CALLED THEM UNTO HIM, AND SAID, SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME, AND FORBID THEM NOT: FOR OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD.— Luke xviii. 16.

WHEN a little child dies, we say it has gone to heaven. We rejoice in this, we could be satisfied with nothing else. This not only our hearts demand, but our reason confirms; with this, all our ideas of God and Christ harmonize. We not only feel that it must be so, but our doctrine definitely asserts it. We predicate heaven of childhood not in spite of our articles of faith; rather it is one of the Unitarian, the Christ-Church tenets, that children go to heaven. We have no embarrassment on this subject, no other notions we entertain throw a shadow of doubt on this. In the fulness, the exactness, in all the rigor of the Unitarian faith, standing at the centre of our system, we affirm and feel this.

The Unitarian faith, beginning in God as the central unity, is unitary, harmonious, throughout. It takes in the whole of humanity and the whole of divinity. Hence, as a system, it is complete and

beautiful as that of the astronomic world. It does not say to a mother, agonized at the death of her child, bleeding in all the depths of her affections, "True, you wish to think your child has gone to heaven, true, your maternal desires would carry it to the bosom of its God; you wish ever after to imagine it happy. We pity you; we will pray for you; but we must be cautious what we say. We know all are born in sin; we know, without a change of nature, none can find salvation. We hope, in some way we cannot explain, that the atoning blood of Christ will avail for your child; but we do not know, we have no assurance; we must submit, leave all to God, and be as easy as we can."

No. We say, God, the one God, in whose oneness, in whose entire, unitary universe all things are embraced, — this our God, we say, loves the mother and loves the child, and even sent Jesus to tell us how much God loves little children. He has placed an immortal soul in the child's body, and undying instincts of devotion and tenderness in the mother's breast; and God loves the soul of the child he has made, and loves the heart of the mother he has filled with instincts, and loves to have mothers love their children, and has made it a part of the eternal laws of his own great unitary kingdom, that there should be this mutual love; and when the child dies, we say God still keeps hold of the child he has made, still embraces in his great unitary scheme the little one into whom he breathed the breath of life. In a word, he takes it to heaven; and to these deep maternal yearnings he says, "You may love your child

still ; these irresistible emotions are all prophecies of a reunion ; in other worlds, in other stages of being, they shall all be satisfied. One God, one love of God, one purpose of God, one jurisdiction of God, reign throughout the universe, and these shall make mother and child one again." Unitarianism, or the doctrine of the Divine unity, leads directly to this, that children go to heaven ; indeed, it is as a broad path in which little children are conducted to the abodes of bliss.

"Go to heaven" ; — what is this ? Heaven is the holiest place in the universe, it is the most beautiful, the most sacred. It is, at least, a state where the selectest influences prevail, where the general atmosphere is clearest and purest. It is the nearer presence of God, it is where Christ most personally appears, it is where angel and archangel are, and where the best people of whom we can conceive are congregated. This is where little children go ; and we sometimes conceive that angels, whose ministry is that of good, take charge of the little ones, and feed them with immortal food, and clothe them with immortal habiliments, and lead them by the crystal brooks. And we most fondly think of Christ, as he did when upon earth, taking them into his arms and blessing them, and saying, Of such is the kingdom of God. And it seems to us sometimes as if the old saints gathered about what indeed died here, but is as a new-born child there, welcoming it to its new position and its untold felicity.

We are happy to have it so ; we feel that our child is safe, that it will be taken care of, that it is gar-

nered in the everlasting fold; and wherever we go upon the earth, however wide may be our wanderings, or deep our engrossments, or tried our lot, we feel that our child is sheltered and secure in that spot which we call heaven. This thought, I say, cheers and sustains us; we would not have it otherwise, we rejoice that the child of our loins has entered the very centre of sanctity and goodness in all the universe.

This is all right, this is just as it should be, we say; we are glad that our faith leads to these conclusions, and confirms such a result. We would not have our child out of that holy place which we call heaven, out of that inner sanctuary that the spiritual world is to us, for any thing. We sometimes speak as if our children ought to go to heaven, as if there were no other place in the realms of thought fit for them. We know the waywardness and follies of childhood, but oh! every mother feels as if heaven were not too good for her child. If it were suggested that such or such a one was a bad boy, the mother replies, "He will be better in heaven; he was not naturally bad, and he had so many virtues! heaven is the true place to develop his character."

So, I say, when the child dies, these feelings come in and we are comforted. We not only believe that God is just and good, but that his justice and goodness extend to the comprehension of the soul and the everlasting destiny of our own little ones.

Very well, all well, all reasonable, proper, and gracious. But look at another thing. Look at that which stands quite contrasted with what we have

been speaking of. When a child is born, what do we do with it? Do we feel that it belongs to the Church, that it is born into the Church, that it enters the Church, that it is a member of the Church? O no! We, or at least the great mass of Christians, feel that their children are born into the world, born out of the Church. They feel that the Church is too good, too holy a place, an institution, or position for their children to be in. They hope, if their children grow up and *get a new nature*, then they will join the Church. But if they should die, why, they believe their children will go to heaven just as they are. They will go to heaven if they die, but yet here, as they are, they are unfit for the Church! The popular superstition on this subject, for I can really give it no milder name, virtually makes the Church holier, purer than heaven!

Take the popular idea of the Church, such as prevails in all New England, that it is a special collection of people, a small but sacred body, within what is called the Society, and, as is everywhere understood, you have a community of good men and women; they are called saints, or sanctified ones, they are all supposed to have new natures. God is thought to be in a peculiar manner with them, the Holy Spirit dwells especially in their hearts, they are conformed to Christ's image, they pray, they love. In every parish is such a circle, which is thought to be the centre of sanctity, a kind of Holy of Holies here on the earth. Let us suppose for a moment that the theory is true, that they are all really saints, while the rest of mankind are sinners.

Now let a child be born in one of the parishes, let it be born, if you will, to these church-members, these reputed saints, and what will you do with that child? where will you put it? Will you put it into the Church, to be integrally a part and parcel of it? Or will you put it into the world, to be part and parcel of that? One or the other you must do, you always do. The child, according to invariable and omnipotent usage, at birth, enters either the Church or the world. Will you cause it to grow up a Church child, or will you let it grow up as it may, with the hope that it will some time or other join the Church? Practically, there is no question as to what you will do, as to what everybody does here in America. They would shudder at the idea of deeming the child to be in the Church.

Yet when the little one dies, we say it has gone to heaven! We put it there in our imagination, our hearts, our hope. We cannot bear to think of its going anywhere else. And even those people who have the narrowest and most pharisaic notions about the Church are everywhere trying to make themselves believe their children, when they die, go to heaven. Here truly is something to marvel at, to weep over, if there were any to sympathize with your tears. And what is the reason of this conduct? Ask yourselves. Why, the Church is so sacred a place, so holy a community, people think it would not be right to let their little children belong to it; it would seem a kind of profanity to put them into it. The Church is taken for a kind of type of sanctity. It is called Zion; it is supposed to be God's peculiar heri-

tage, it is the centre of selectest influences, and we dare not place our children in it. It is the type of sanctity, I say. But what are the elements of its sanctity? Are they any higher or purer than those of heaven? Are they in any essential degree different? I am willing, for the argument's sake, to suppose the idea of the Church everywhere prevalent to be perfectly true, that it is the seat of highest sanctity; and then I ask, Is it higher than heaven's sanctity? God, God's spirit, Christ, holiness, purity, love, obedience, these are supposed to be in the Church; they are in heaven also.

Are you willing, father, that your little boy, or mother, that your little girl, should be of the Church? If you feel as most parents do, you say, No. But let your little boy or your little girl die; and you say, "Our child has gone to heaven!" Now heaven is really only more sacred, pure, and beautiful than the Church; that is the fact about it.

Some may say, "The Church is so bad we will not put our children into it." This is not the common idea, it is not the idea we have to combat. The common idea is, "The Church is too good to put our children into it. We do not certainly know as they will grow up good children, and it would be dreadful to have them grow up bad children, and at the same time be in the Church."

But I want to inquire how you can expect your children to grow up good, if they are not in the good place, or become holy, reverent, if they are not in the holy, reverent, sacred place. If you would teach your child to swim, you put him in the water; if you

would have him healthy, you place him where the air is healthful; if you would have him a skilful mechanic, you put him where mechanics are taught most skilfully; if you would have him an accomplished merchant, you put him where the mercantile art is best understood; if you would have him polite in manners, you like to have him go amongst the most mannerly people; if you would have him rise to high rank as a sailor, you send him to sea. When you would have him good, pious, Christian, you keep him farthest possible from those who represent the highest goodness, purity, Christ-likeness, the Church!

“But there is the Lord’s Supper, and our children might become communicants of the body and blood of their Lord!” And what if they did? Is there anything dreadful about that? If they die, are they not to eat of the fruits of Paradise, drink of what is typified as the new wine? Are they not even as little children to be brought into special communion with Christ in the next world?

I need not pursue the subject. I hardly have a heart to. Only I think we cannot fail to see and feel, not only how heretical, how irrational, but how terribly diseased and grossly erroneous, is public sentiment everywhere touching the Church, and especially touching the relation of children to the Church.

I thought of these things the other day, when I was called to bury a little child. The mother felt her little one had gone, as we say, to a better world. And I felt so too. But was that mother ever willing her children should go into what is deemed the best portion of this world, the Church? On so

solemn an occasion, I would not indulge in bitter thoughts, or venture painful suggestions. Only I cannot forbear asking, O ye fathers and mothers! what are ye doing with your children? God sends them away into the heavenly world, and you rejoice there is a heaven, holy and pure, for them to go to. Christ, so to say, stands at the door of his Church, and asks them to come in, and no parent is willing.

A child is born here on the earth, helpless, weak, undeveloped, unperfected, liable to fall, liable to sin. What will you do with it? Where will you put it? Now, I say, if there be a holy spot, a holy community, a holy sphere on the earth, or a holiest, I would put the child into it. If the Church be that holy spot, then the child shall go into that. The primary holy place for the child is, indeed, the family; but the great universal holy place is the Church. Or rather, all families should be church families, and so all children church children. If the family be a bad, an irreligious one, then all the more should its children be gathered into the Church. If Zion, or the Church, be where God most peculiarly dwells, of all places, the children should dwell there too. If Christ be bread from heaven, most peculiarly should he be bread for the children. If he be the Shepherd of his people, most peculiarly should he be the Shepherd of the little children. If the Church be the body of Christ, most peculiarly should the children be of it. If the Church consist of pious men and women, regenerate men and women, of persons who pray, who do not lie or steal, or profane the name of God, then that is the place of all others for the children. If the Church feeds on

Christ, in a higher, truer sense than the world does, then, on all accounts, let the children taste that immortal, that divine food, that they may grow thereby. If there is less sin in the Church than in the world, then, whenever a child is born, we should at once feel that its true place is in the Church, rather than in the world.

SERMON IX.



CHILDREN TO BE COMMUNICANTS.

HE SHALL FEED HIS FLOCK LIKE A SHEPHERD; HE SHALL GATHER THE LAMBS WITH HIS ARM, AND CARRY THEM IN HIS BOSOM, AND SHALL GENTLY LEAD THOSE THAT ARE WITH YOUNG.—
Isaiah xl. 11.

THIS language is thought to be prophetic of Christ. It may refer to Christ, or the Christian Church, or the Christian ministry. At least, it is pertinently and beautifully exemplified in the conduct and precepts of Jesus. While he was instructing the parents, he took the little children, the lambs, into his arms. His last words to his disciples were, "Feed my sheep," "Feed my lambs." In short, the sentiment of the passage, whether considered in its prophetic intent or evangelical exemplification, is, that the Christian organization comprehends parents and children alike. In the spirit of this entire unity of position and privilege, pervading all ages and conditions of a given community, the prophet wrote, and our Saviour acted. Even the unborn are not forgotten; but, as if the covenant of grace anticipated the possibilities of being, its providence and forethought

extend to the future, and, like a guardian angel, direct into the way of life the generations as they rise. This is a fundamental law of the moral universe; it is the principle by which God has administered human affairs. It obtained in the Jewish dispensation; it was adhered to by the Founder of the new.

In what is here involved is contained a part, a most essential part, of all my ideas of the Church, the true Christian Church. The principle familiarly stated is this: Lambs follow the sheep. However we treat the sheep, so we treat the lambs. If we can find a sweeter pasture or a clearer stream where we will lead the sheep, there we will lead the lambs also. Here you have the germ, the paradigm, the illustration and philosophy of all my theory of the Church. Lambs follow the sheep, children their parents. If parents feed on the heavenly bread, children feed on heavenly bread; if parents commune with Jesus, children commune with Jesus; if parents keep the Sabbath, children keep the Sabbath; if parents love God, children are to love God. And this from very necessity of nature, this from the law of birth. Lambs follow the sheep because they are lambs; children follow their parents because they are their children, and fundamentally for no other reason. In more precise terms, if sheep are in the fold, the lambs are in the fold; if parents are in the Church, children are in the Church. Lambs do not get into the fold because the shepherd performs any ceremony upon them, or they pass through any change; they are there because they

are born there. Children do not get into the Church *because of baptism*, or any permission of the Church, or any formula that may be pronounced; they are there *because they were born there*. Just as children are in the State and in the Family by birth, so are they in the Church.

This is common sense, this is sound philosophy; it is also the Bible from one end to the other. "Feed my sheep," says Jesus, "Feed my lambs." Peter exhorts us to feed the flock of God. Paul enjoins, "Take heed to all the flock, and feed the Church of God." The Church of God and the flock of God are the same. A flock is made up of sheep and lambs. Now, I am called *a pastor*, that is, a shepherd; and what is *my flock*? You are all my flock, men, women, and children. The children are just as much, just as integrally, just as essentially, of the flock as the parents. Well, I must feed you all alike, give one as good, as pure, as heavenly food as another. The only difference will be, I shall simplify the food for the lambs, or the children. I feed you on Christ, on his truth, his blessedness, his spirit, his emblems; and I must feed the children just as I do the parents. If there is any doubt about what my flock is, that, indeed, is another question. Show me what my flock is, and you define at once the sphere and the nature of my duties. You say such or such a one is not of my flock. That may be. But let me say, I consider all who are in the habit of worshipping in Christ Church my flock. And my church, that over which God hath made me overseer, is coextensive and uniform with my flock. Now will you allow

that this or that man or woman belongs to my flock? Then I shall insist that their children, whom they bring hither, are my flock also, and if my flock, then my church.

Some say they do not understand the word *church* in the sense in which we use it. This word *flock* very neatly and very comprehensively defines it. A flock is a certain number of sheep under the care of one man, or who receive natural food from one man's hand. A church, speaking of things in detail, is a certain number of people that receive spiritual food from one man's hand. If a minister, then, wants to know what his church is, he has only to see what his flock is. If there is any one present who comes not to be fed, but for sinister and extraneous purposes, of course he is not of our flock or our church. If any one — man, woman, or child — is here for spiritual food, for religious growth and culture, such a one is of the flock and of the church. I know no church that is made up of only a small part of the flock. I have no food for one that I have not for another; none for parents that I have not for children. There are no partition-walls within Christ Church, no negro pews, no alien pews. Christ Church is its own wall. Within here, it is an open area of position, privilege, and duty.

What is the object in feeding sheep? That they may live and grow. What is the object in feeding people? That they may live and grow. Without food we starve and perish. Without spiritual food we starve and perish. A Christian pastor feeds his flock, his church, that they may live and grow. He

feeds parents and children all alike, for the same great end. We need life, spiritual life, in other words, spiritual health and strength, and we cannot have health and strength unless we eat. Our souls need to grow, all our faculties want maturing, our whole being should attain to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. In order that we may grow well, that we may have the very best health and strength, we need the best food. Children, or the lambs, need just as choice food as the parents, or the sheep; there is no difference.

What is the design of this whole Church system? Why do you build a meeting-house? why have a minister? why assemble at stated seasons? It is that you may have true life, that your deepest nature may be developed, that you may be strengthened for every good word and work, that the Holy Spirit may more and more pervade you; in brief, that you may become good, and better men and women and children. So that the whole design of the Christian Church touches the young as much as the old.

Lambs, we say, are born into the fold, and children are born into the Church; and being there, we know at once what to do with them. We are to feed them. And we see at once what the whole Church system is for. It is to feed these lambs, these children, that they may grow up Christians, or, if you will, good men and good women. We would save them from starving and perishing. Lambs are not born, and then thrown out of the fold; neither are children born to be thrown out of the Church; for if it were so, we should not have anything to do with them.

Lambs follow the sheep; children, their parents; they are never to be separated. When parents are in a Church relation, then are the children also. If it were not so, if they were separated, then we could not feed them alike.

Now Christ says, "I am the bread from heaven; he that eateth me shall live by me." If here is a parent who eats that bread and lives that life, his children must eat the same bread and live the same life. There is no difference. Christ says, "I am the vine, and ye are the branches." If here is a parent who is a branch, his children are parts of the branch, twigs, if you will, or buds, and all alike abiding in Christ. Christ gives us water, of which if a man drink he shall never thirst. The children need to drink that water just as much as lambs need milk. Christ says, "Do this in remembrance of me." If parents must do a particular thing in remembrance of Christ, so must the children. If the parents must love God and their neighbor, so must the children.

You say that I make all the people in and of the Church, church-members, to use a word nowhere found in Scripture. So I do. But there are bad people here! Now let us understand each other. The whole object — or at least it is sufficient for my present purpose to say the whole object — of the Church, its Sabbaths, its ordinances, its influences, is the attainment of spiritual life in Christ Jesus, or *to educate Christians*. Now the primary question is, not whether there are good or bad persons here. The primary question is, Are we here for the purpose just indicated? If so, then my duty is clear. I

must so teach and pray and act as to aid you to grow up living, healthful Christians. If there are any here for other purposes, for foreign and wholly different purposes, — if there are parents here, and if parents have their children here, for reasons that have nothing to do with the great end of our being here, why, I have nothing to do with such persons to-day. I have nothing to say to them. I am, so to say, feeding out Jesus Christ to-day; and if there are those here who do not want this heavenly food, pray, do not blame me for giving it to those who do. These others are certainly not my flock nor my church. I regard all my flock and my church, — all, I say, old and young, — who seek the food it is the province of a Christian pastor to give.

We have been accustomed to conceive of the Church as a select and ordinarily small body of adult persons, who had met with a change, professed religion, communicated at the Lord's table, were in covenant with God and one another, and would probably go to heaven when they should die. For one to join the Church was a notable event, something that everybody talked about. The act of joining was scenic and solemn. We have been so trained to this idea, we can hardly think of the Church as anything else. But this is a very imperfect idea of the Church, and practically most pernicious.

The Church is the body of the good, in heaven and on earth, whose supreme head is God. The Church, again, is a body of people associated to worship God through Christ. It is, again, by courtesy of language, a building in which such people meet to

worship. More particularly and pointedly, the Church expresses that fundamental form of human society in which mankind unite as religious beings, for the worship of God, growth in grace, and the promotion of righteousness. This last describes just what we are to-day; that divinely ordained form of human society in which men meet for these sacred purposes. What is most striking is that *we all meet*, — all ages, conditions, sexes. Herein we see how the Church is analogous to the other two great forms of human society, the Family and the State. These comprise all ages, conditions, and sexes. Herein you see how the Church, together with these other two orders, is separated and distinguished from all other, the transient forms of human society. You go to a corporation meeting, there are only men there; you go to a sewing-circle, there are only women there; you go to a school, there are are only children there; you go to a party, there are only invited guests there; you come to what we call the Church, and there is everybody here, men and women, old and young, parents and children, rich and poor. Parents and children, I say, parents with their children; parents own pews in which the whole family sit.

Well, then, you all are the Church, all who meet in this godly way, parents and children. The children are just as much the Church as the parents. This building in which we meet, except by courtesy of speech, is not the Church, not the real Church, but the people who habitually assemble here for religious purposes are the Church. The smallest child here is just as much a part of the Church as the gray-

headed man. In this view you see at once, not only how narrow, but how exceedingly false, is the common view of the Church. It calls only a select portion of those who habitually assemble for religious purposes the Church, and all the others, the vast majority, it calls no-church, the world. But worse still, in that limited number called the Church are no children! Fatal, dreadful, most inhuman mistake. Parents belong to it, join it, but do not take their children with them; never, never, in virtue of their being their children. Lambs do not follow the sheep, nor children parents. Parents do dress their little children to come to meeting, as we say; they bring them into this public meeting-place, they seat them orderly in these pews. Why? Why? In virtue of their being their children. This is the governing law. But when they unite with the Church, as we say, go forward to the Lord's table,—in a word, the moment parents really enter what is called the Church, the sacred fold,—they leave their children behind; they separate from their children. The Church system that everywhere prevails destroys the sacred unity of the family, breaks up the God-ordained law, that in religious matters children follow their parents, violates the sacred integrity of the family.

We will have no such Church, we will be no such Church. We will recognize the Divine condition of things; we will throw ourselves back on the polity of God; we will conform to the unerring statutes of reason and revelation. We are a different Church from all that. We, this worshipping

congregation, this regularly constituted assembly, this sober and religious convocation, — *we*, I say, these husbands and wives, these brothers and sisters, these children and children's children, are a Church; we, the whole of us, who meet in Christ's name, and no particular few, are the Church.

Now what about the Communion? This is what I say; it is for the whole Church, and not for a part of it. See how the matter stands. We, the Church called Christ Church, have a holy day, called the Sabbath, a holy house, called a sanctuary; we have holy ordinances, worship, instruction, singing, baptism, and the Communion. Well, all, for all. This is our maxim and law; all for all. But shall the children partake of the Lord's Supper? Strange, in this nineteenth century of our religion, to hear such a question; stranger, that any reasonable mind can doubt on the point! But so it is, the question is asked, doubts are felt. I answer, Yes, of course. I answer this unhesitatingly, unqualifiedly. Not only does my theory lead to such a result, but my convictions side with it. Nay, I would have the children partakers of the holy Communion, if it upset every theory I could frame. Feed my sheep, feed my lambs; lambs follow the sheep, children their parents, all for all, there is no difference. As did Judah of old, so on this interesting occasion ought we all to stand before the Lord, with our wives, our little ones, and our children. When Christ says, "Do this in remembrance of me," if he means anybody, anybody, he means the children. If Christ is bread from heaven to any, he is so to the children.

If these emblems typify the bread that he is to our souls, they typify it to the children. We, the Church, give the Sabbath to our children, as to all others, and expect them to keep it; we give the Bible to our children, and expect them to revere it; we give public worship to them, and expect them to engage in it; so we must give the Lord's Supper to our children, or we are recreant to every principle of duty, reason, and religion.

I know we may imagine our children are not prepared for the communion. And why? Solely, my friends, because we have not prepared them, by training them up to it, and in it. I, your minister, am to blame in this; ye parents are to blame; an erroneous sentiment is everywhere to blame. Suppose you had never given your children the Sabbath until by some special change they were prepared for it, and had brought them up outside of the Sabbath, as we have educated them outside of the Communion. Why, they never would be prepared for it. So of the Bible, so of prayer, so of the sunlight, so of roses. The true and only way to prepare children for the greatest, holiest, best things of experience or of observation, of this world or another, is to bring them up in those things.

But the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is more holy than these other things. I deny that it is one whit more holy than the Sabbath, or the Bible, or prayer. But granting that it were; let us suppose, for argument's sake, it were much more holy, a hundred times more holy, the holiest thing in the universe. Blessed be God! that is the very thing I want

the children to have, that is just what I would give to the children, I was going to say, sooner than to anybody else. Show me what is most holy, most pure, most heavenly, and I will show you what children most need. He was blessed who gave a cup of cold water in Christ's name to the little one. Doubly blessed he who shall give the cup symbolical of the very life of Jesus to the little ones. Children receive truth through pictures more than adults. These emblems are a species of pictures perhaps of greater utility to the children than to their parents. Did not Christ live and die for children? and shall we, dare we, refuse to them that in which his living, and dying are shown forth?

In Washington, they are erecting a monument to the memory of that great name. If you were in Washington with your family, you would account it a sin to refuse to take your children with you to see that monument. If there were a class of people there who taught that children and others must first meet with a change before they could be deemed patriots, and permitted to see the monument, you would exclaim, with astonishment, Why, let your children behold the monument, that they may become patriots. In this sacrament Christ has erected a kind of monument of himself. It is a very ancient monument, one of rare grace and finish, and covered with touching images and inscriptions. And he says, Visit it, behold it, in remembrance of me. Will you not take your children with you? Of course you will. If any say, The children must first meet with a change, must first become Christians, before

they can behold the monument of Christ; you will reply, We bring them to the monument that they may be Christians, that Christianity may be deepened in their hearts. The State does well to have its monuments, the Church does well to have its monuments. But, indeed, how much better the State does by its children than the Church has ever done!

Why did Christ die? To save men, we say. And to save children? Then, of course, children should commemorate his death. But more particularly, the immediate object of his death was to extend the covenant blessings of God to the whole human race, and to the children, of course. Therefore should the children commemorate his death. Or thus, Christ died a sacrifice to his grand, divine purpose of good to man. His whole life was devoted to such a purpose, and in his death it was consummated. In all this, and in all that pertains to it, children are equally interested with others. Shall we, dare we, in the Sunday school, teach the affecting story of the great Redeemer's love and toils and agony, and deny to them the memorials of those things? God forbid!

If, as some imagine, the Lord's Supper be a saving ordinance, if it peculiarly gathers within itself the life of Christ, if his spirit there gushes and flows and pervades all who partake of it, then by all means let the children come. If it be a sacred scene, a sweet spot, a gracious, comforting, sustaining, sanctifying rite, then by all means bring the children to it. If Christ be nearer his people there than elsewhere, if his

voice be heard there, his presence felt, if his bleeding side be open there, or his benignant countenance appear there, as nowhere else, then, O, then let the children be brought nigh!

It was a most searching, truthful, and beautiful idea of the old father, Irenæus, that Christ passed through all ages of man that he might save all by himself, infants and little ones, and youths and persons advanced in years. We hardly realize that Christ was once a little child like these children, a good little child, and that these are to become good by him. He is a child for the children, as well as a man for the men. And therefore should the children keep all the tender, affecting memorials of himself. "He was made an infant for infants, that he might sanctify infants; and for little ones he was made a little one, to sanctify them of that age also." The case is this. We and our children are a church, "we and our posterity," it matters not how far the succession descends; it is one church still, the Church of God and Christ. As a church, we have a church-house, or meeting-house, church days or meeting days, a church pastor, church service, church rites; and all for all; and the children are, by birth, inalienably, incontestably, and for ever involved in the whole concern, — endowed with its honors, holden to its responsibilities, inheritors of its past, testators of its future.

Why *should* the children partake of the Lord's Supper? Why anybody? "To profess religion?" A foolish reason. But suppose it a good one, the children ought to profess religion as well as others.

“That people may be in covenant one with another, to watch over one another, and offer a more united front to the powers of evil?” The very place of all others for the children to be. *Why* partake of the Lord’s Supper, do you ask? Why do anything in a church way? The Lord’s Supper is not the only church instrumentality. The Sabbath and the Bible are of the same stamp. And the question is answered when we reply to the general question, What is the use of the Sabbath, or the Bible, or public worship, or any service of the Church? The reply, of course, is, to make people good, to train them up Christians, to regenerate the soul. The Lord’s Supper is but one branch of this great spiritual ministration.

“Children cannot understand the Lord’s Supper.” I venture to assert, if we bring up our children properly, there is no religious duty, no custom, no truth, children can so easily understand as this. I mean this: I think they can understand it better than they can understand the Old Testament Scriptures, or prayer, or coming to the house of God; as well as they can understand benevolence, or forbearance, or love. If at this moment they do not understand it, it is because we have wholly failed to bring them up to it. Our children would be as orderly and reverential in this service as in prayer, or preaching, or singing, if we parents had only trained ourselves and them to it.

The doctrine of total depravity and original sin shoved the Church from its true basis, and broke the natural connection between believing parents and

their children. Unitarianism denies that dogma, and restores the Church to its true basis. It unites parents and children in the Church. It makes the Church consist of parents with their children. It gives back to the Church and the fold, and the arms of Jesus, the children that have been so long sundered from him. Such are we before God to-day; such are we, elders, youths, children; such are we, or we are nothing, a mere collection of heathen and publicans.

Baptism does not admit or *initiate* into the Church. This was the fatal postulate of the theory of depravity, and is a mere device to save the Church from the pit she had digged for herself. It is here where Romanism and Episcopacy and the Baptists all agree. They all alike say to the generations of children as they are born into the Christian community, You cannot enter the Church except you be baptized. Indeed, Trinitarianism almost universally takes this ground. Romanism unequivocally teaches, in its Catechism of the Council of Trent, "Unless infants are baptized, *be their parents Christians* or infidels, they are born to eternal misery and everlasting perdition."* In other words, without baptism, the children even of the Church, of pious parents, cannot be admitted into the Church, into the estate and fellowship of their parents, into the communion of saints, or into the body of which Christ is the head. Episcopacy teaches the same thing. It teaches that baptism is necessary to salvation. I have before me a sermon

* Miller's "Design of the Church," p. 120.

by the Rev. Mr. Spencer, an Episcopal clergyman of New York, urging this very point. He says, all mankind are born to condemnation; that, in their natural state, children "are left to the uncovenanted mercies of God." To the unbaptized he addresses these words: "You have no claim to the mercy of God; you have never been made Christians; you can never be entitled to this name, or to the privileges of Christ's Church. Baptism is necessary to the salvation of every one that can obtain it; it is the only way in which we can become Christians, the only way in which we can enter the Church of God." This is the way Episcopacy addresses the children of its own Church; in this way it shows its utter ignorance of what Rev. Nehemiah Adams, of Boston, calls "a fundamental principle of God's moral government of the universe."

What then to us is Baptism? I reply, in the language of the Cambridge Platform, "Baptism presupposeth a Church estate, as circumcision in the Old Testament, which gave no being to the Church, *the Church being before it*, and in the wilderness without it. Seals presuppose a covenant already in being." Children get into the Church just as they get into the Family, or the State, or the Sabbath, or into the whole course and current of institutions and influences that surround them, simply by being born there. And thus being in the Church, along with their parents, being in the divine covenant of God, baptism is the recognition of their birthright, the seal of the covenant of membership; it is an emblem of the Holy Ghost and fire, the purifying

holy spirit in which Christ baptizes his people. It is an outward act whereby parents in the Church, on their part, in the presence of the great cloud of witnesses, solemnly dedicate their children to God and Christ and the Church, to the Christian life and the Christian destiny, and publicly confess the duty of Christian nurture and admonition.

The children being in the Church, indigenously to it, to the manner born, having the Church seal thus impressed upon them, what then? All that the Church is accrues to the children. They are forevermore integrant parts of it, they are heirs of God and fellow-citizens of the household of faith. All that has been regarded in church things as most internal and secret, most solemn and profound, most holy and blessed, is made over to them. But more than this. We have now got the whole congregation, the constituent members of the parish, the varied mass that come up hither on the Lord's day, in a position where, as a Christian pastor, we can properly deal with them. We see at once how to preach to them, how to teach them, how the whole series of our service, our praying, our singing, our baptism, our communion, adapts itself to them.

Suppose we consider the Church as a school, and Christ the great teacher, and the people as disciples, learners, scholars. The little children are all scholars too, fellow-pupils with their parents, all sitters at the feet of Jesus, fellow-listeners to divine instructions, fellow-disciples of divine truth. We shall have to teach the very small children, the youngest church-members, the *a b c* of Christian-

ity. Beautiful, delightful employment! And here at once we see the significancy and the force of the Sunday school. From Sunday to Sunday, according to what was enjoined under the old covenant, we will gather the people, the whole Church, here together, men and women and children, and the stranger that is within our gate, that we may hear and learn and fear the Lord our God, and observe to do all the words of his law, and that our children, *which have not known any thing*, may hear and learn to fear the Lord our God as long as we live in the land. If we liken the Church to a commonwealth, and it is so likened in Scripture, we see how we all, parents and children, stand related to it. The children are born into it, they are fellow-citizens with their parents in a divine community, a common law governs all, a common protection is over all. Our children become an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward. This Christ Church is a little commonwealth, and other local churches become little commonwealths, and these shall spread into one greater commonwealth; where evermore shall reign Liberty, Holiness, Love, where suffrage shall be free, independency observed, and office accessible to all. As the fathers are gathered to the dust, the children shall rise to their places. Where duty leads or dangers threaten, we shall offer the energy of a united people to whatever we may be called, and we shall be blessed in the land which the Lord our God giveth us.

“One is not necessarily saved by being in the Church.” No, indeed. But we are in the Church

that we *may be saved*. This is a cardinal point, a most interesting feature of the case. The children are in the Church, of it, church-members, and this, so to say, is but the beginning of their salvation; they are now to grow up Christians, to be trained in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They are born, as we say, on Church soil, — little sprouts just springing out of the ground. They must be cultivated, watered, dressed, weeded, fertilized. The great work of life is just begun at childhood; we are to advance to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. Regeneration, or the birth of the spirit, the unfolding of our religious natures, the acquisition of highest truth, the feeding on celestial food, — all this is to go on in the Church, and not out of it.

The common idea is, after persons are regenerated, sanctified, saved, then they may enter the Church; and this is predicable only of adult persons. Our idea is that the Church incloses, comprehends, all ages, just as the State does; that it not only takes the lambs in its arms, but gently leads those that are with young; that infancy is nourished, as it were, at the bosom of the Church; that childhood is led by its maternal hand; that all our years, from the cradle to the grave, imbibe its spirit and reflect its holiness; and especially and imperatively, that the very susceptible and critical period of youth is subject to its holiest influences, accepts its highest sanctions, feels its restraints, and is inspired by its wisdom.

Now, viewing my flock as one, parents and children, in the same covenant of a common faith, unit-

ed in the same responsibility and hope, what, I ask again, about the children and the Lord's Supper, — that tender point? and what about it, granting this ordinance is really more sacred than anything else? During the last month we have had common Sabbaths, and now comes what some are pleased to consider more holy, a Communion Sabbath. During this past time, I as a Shepherd have been leading you, my flock, sheep and lambs, over common ground. In the great pasture, on the second Sabbath I took you here; on the third, there; to such spots as I could. As I piped, the lambs came running along behind their parents; and I gave you all as good food as I could. But Communion Sabbath comes, a more holy time, if you will have it so; in other words, to-day I your shepherd espy in the distance a more attractive spot, of more grateful shade, more delectable herbage, clearer streams, more sunny, more Arcadian. I sound my pipe, and start for that direction. The sheep follow me, but the lambs must not go! Or thus: to-day is our festival day, when we peculiarly commemorate Christ, when in silence and meditation we get near to one another and the Lord, when we enter the holy of holies, where God manifests himself peculiarly to his people, when we stand where the horizon of spiritual intelligence stretches around us, and we come into the infinite circle of the good and the pure. These parents may keep holy time with us, but the children must not! Or thus: we go to-day to the scene of the Last Supper, we pass over the brook Kidron, to the garden and beneath the shade of the olive-trees; we witness that

perilous struggle of all that was human in our Saviour with all that was divine in duty; we go to Calvary and look on while this great Martyr of the ages breathes out his soul; we linger pensive and silent about the sepulchre; we share with Mary and Peter the transports of the resurrection; we gaze as that image of heavenly beauty rises into the heavens; — and may not the children go with us?

The comprehension of children in this rite is not wholly a strange thing. The Passover was the great covenant feast of the Mosaic religion, and Jewish parents were wont to distribute the bread and the wine to their children, with thanksgiving to Almighty God. So the Lord's Supper is the covenant feast of the Christian religion, and the early Christians were wont in their own houses to give the bread and wine to their children. This is a well-known historical fact. And when we read, still earlier, of the disciples breaking bread from house to house, it admits of no manner of doubt to my mind, that their children partook with them. For some centuries it was customary in many churches to comprise children in this ordinance. Heathen parents used to take their infants in their arms when they went to sacrifice at the altar, and this seems to have been urged as a motive for Christian parents to do the same by theirs.* The Greek Church to this day universally communicates children. Tasso, the Italian poet, relates that he was scarcely nine years old when he first partook of the Lord's Supper. With-

* Bingham's Ant.

out fully understanding the mystery, he yet participated with the deepest devotion and joy. "Long years afterwards," he says, "he could not forget the sensations with which he received the symbols of his Saviour into that earthly body of his, a dwelling-place yet uncontaminated, simple, and pure."* Need I repeat that the Jews and Gentile nations universally, so far as I know, join their children with them in their most sacred rites. We see, then, how the so-called Church almost everywhere has departed from the primitive and apostolic antecedents, and how especially it has forgotten that fundamental law impressed by God on human nature, and written in all human history, whereby in religious matters the family is a unit, and children are in covenant with their parents.

I will ask you, mother, however you may reason on this subject, however conventional prejudices may arise in your heart at the thought of what we say, as you to-day think of your boy far off on the restless, treacherous ocean, or away in some other place, amid strangers and perplexities and profaneness, seeking respite from toil, yet finding more onerous struggle with temptations that environ him, in some city, perhaps, where even the multitude creates an uneasy sense of solitude, and the rest of the Sabbath often gives rein to every baser passion, — I will ask you, fond mother, if you would not take greater satisfaction to-day, immeasurably greater, if you could think that you had not only prayed for

* Life, Vol. I. p. 61.

your child, and brought him to the house of God, and had him instructed in the Sabbath School, but also from his earliest years had likewise taken him to the communion-table with you, had made him feel that he was coequal and absolute part and parcel of the Church with you, had identified his growing years with all the purposes and all the rites of Christianity, and enrolled, I will not say his name, but his thoughts, his imagination, his destiny, in that book where the whole fraternity of the good in heaven and earth are recorded? And, my friends, when our children die, and we so easily, and so naturally, so irresistibly, assign them their place in the Church above, will we ever again be negligent, or hesitating, or sceptical, in bringing them into the Church below? Have I, your minister, been to blame in this matter, God forgive me, and forbid that I should ever be so again! As things now are, our young people have no sense, no deep, vital sense, of Christian responsibility. And I maintain, that, however we may try to give them a Christian education, and awe them with Christian admonitions, and store them with Christian advice, so long as we keep them out of the Christian Church they never will have this sense; and for the reason that this whole thing of Christian responsibility centres within the Church, and is, so to say, monopolized by it. We are so trained as to feel that this solemn burden is taken up, and its whole weight borne, by those who join the Church. If then we would that our young men and women possess this sense, in its fulness and entirety, a thing so essential to their happiness, their

usefulness, their moral perfection and complete salvation, they must be in the Church. In England, the Rev. Mr. Armstrong, a Unitarian clergyman, in a recent pastoral letter, adverting to the fact of the general recklessness of youth, says they must come under a higher sense of RESPONSIBILITY. To this end, he proposes what I have just intimated, they must be in the Church.

Awhile since I preached a discourse to this effect, that duty was irrespective of profession,—that a man was bound to be religious whether he had made a profession or no. This was addressed to that condition of things in which we find all our parishes, a few professors and a mass of non-professors. As the term is used, and the affair is managed, I think very little of what is called making a profession of religion. I have sometimes thought I would none of it. The question is not whether we will make a profession of religion, but whether we will be religious and Christian, and especially train up our children to be religious and Christian. Nor is it now the question how the multitude of us will act in view of that little collection called the Church, but whether we all, parents and children, enter that sphere and occupy that post at once of obligation and sustentation, of duty and of hope,—the Church? Question? No, it is no question. I have never preached to you but as one, I have never enforced duty upon you but as one, I have practically ignored the pale by which a few may be surrounded. What I now do is to take that pale and surround the whole of you with it. And this brings me round

to the point where I have ever stood, but now more perfectly defined, that of preaching duty and obligation to you as all alike church-members ; that is, all occupying before God the highest position of responsibility. If any do not like such preaching and such a position, all I can say is, I do not see how, since God has raised such a standard for us in his word and in our own consciousness, I can lower it for any man.

Some will say they wish their children to grow up free, perfectly free. So do I, in any just sense of the word. But I take it you do not wish them to grow up free to be atheists, to be profane, to sin, — free from the highest Christian obligations. If you do, you would of course not bring them here. You wish them, I shall presume, to grow up Christians, rooted in Christian principles, and determined to a Christian life, to be such freemen as the truth makes free. You wish them free from sin, and free to do right, wherever they go. To this end, as one gracious means of good, I insist this whole thing of what we call the Church, all that it is and possesses and promises, its sanctions and solemnities, its worship, instruction, and communion, must be given to them, must inclose them, fold them as an atmosphere, guard them as a divinity ?

“Man is evermore liable to fall, young men are liable to go astray.” I know this, I know it, and therefore all the more would I secure their uprightness and shield their steps by every possible instrumentality. Some may imagine their children will not grow up Christians, do the best they can for them.

Possibly. But the promise is, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." And I am sure that, so long as we keep our children out of the position of highest responsibility, a responsibility graduated according to capacity in every case, call it Church or what you will, so long will they not be what we wish them to be. Suppose you wish your child to learn at school, to be a scholar, and after a sort send him to school, yet refuse to let him take on himself the responsibility of the school, or to put him in the position of a scholar; you say to the teacher, I wish my boy to come in here occasionally, I wish him to hear what you have to say, but I do not wish you to regard him as of the school, as a scholar, nor to lay any rules upon him, or enforce any lessons. Just so long, your child never will be a scholar. Now if there be in this building, in this assembly, in this parish, in these gatherings together, a position of high Christian responsibility, which our children cannot reach, to which we refuse to take them, and unto which we dare not commit them, however we may bring them here from Sunday to Sunday, just to look about, or hear what they please to hear and feel what they please to feel, just so long there is a moral certainty they will not grow up Christians. Home influences, and various causes coöperating with the nature that is in them, may make them Christians. But bringing them to meeting in this way never will.

Will it be said, we may reach the position of highest moral and spiritual responsibility out of the

Church? I say, when you have reached that point, you have reached the true Church point, you are the Church. Let us suppose that in the Old South Church, Boston, the large mass now out of the Church should begin to assume the position of highest Christian responsibility, should endeavor among themselves to grow up Christians, and do Christian deeds, and keep holy time, and pray, and have the Lord's Supper and baptism among themselves; why, they instantly become a church. That is the fact about it. What I teach is, that inasmuch as the word Church is only a convenient term for expressing the organization of the religious or Christian element, or since religious society merely defines the word Church, the highest responsibilities commence at the moment of initiating such an organization, and one who enters a truly religious society, duly constituted, enters the Church. Or, in other words, that Church, instead of being confined to a few, covers all that religious society covers, all that flock covers, or all that worshipping congregation covers, and especially that it includes the children.

In bringing what I have to say to a close, let me go back to the children, and ask what, to take it for all in all, is the most critical period of human life? I answer, it is the period of the development of the passions, between the age of twelve and eighteen. This I take to be, on the whole, the most susceptible period for good or evil we pass through. Now I wish to ask, Where shall our youths be at this period, in the Church or out of it? I ask parents, I ask

ministers of parishes everywhere, I ask the philanthropist and the legislator, I ask people of all doctrines and all forms, Where shall our youths be at this period, in the Church or out of it? They must be in one position or the other. As things are, there is no middle ground. I fancy I hear but one answer. They ought to be in the Church. What is most sacred should impress them, what is most benign should embrace them, what is most edifying should mould them, what tends in the highest degree to adorn their natures, correct their selfishness, and sanctify their being, should be theirs. Well, then, to be in the Church during that time, they must be there before they are twelve years old. And now I ask you if you dare to trust so amazing a result to the hazards of special conversion, or the contingencies of a revival. For one, I dare not. There is no alternative, then, recognizing, as we do, the great fact of birth-connection with the Church, but for us to train our children up at once in the Church for the Church, in the Church for the world, in the Church below for the Church above.

SERMON X.



EDUCATION, CONSIDERED AS THE GREAT CHRISTIAN LAW.

BRING UP YOUR CHILDREN IN THE NURTURE AND ADMONITION OF THE LORD.—Ephesians vi. 4.

Ἐκτρέφετε αὐτὰ ἐν παιδείᾳ καὶ νοουθεσίᾳ Κυρίου.
“Nourish them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord”; the schooling and remembrance of Jesus; the knowledge, science, instruction, and memory of Jesus. Bring up your children in the thorough education of the Lord Jesus. Give them a Christian education, educate them into Christ.

Let us place at one end of the scale Peter, the wild boy. He was found in a piece of woods in Germany. When first discovered, he was walking on his hands and feet, climbing up trees like a squirrel, and feeding on grass and moss. When brought to the presence of George the First, who was at dinner, he was offered food from the table, but would eat nothing. Raw meat he devoured with a relish. He was unable to speak, and no one could tell or learn how he came to be abandoned. Escaping from those who had charge of him, he fled again to

the woods, and such was his agility and strength it was impossible to retake him, except by sawing down the tree into which he ran. In about a year he was taught to abandon the use of his hands in walking, and to move about in an erect posture. No inducements could persuade him to lie in a bed, and he would only sleep in a corner of the room. He was placed under the tuition of a celebrated physician of that day, Dr. Arbuthnot, in the hope that after a time he would be enabled to express himself in words. But all efforts to this end were unavailing; he could never be taught to speak. He expressed pleasure by neighing like a horse, and imitating other animal sounds. Unable to be disciplined to the usages of civilized society, he was placed in charge of a farmer, who put him to school, but without visible improvement. He frequently ran away, and seemed to delight to subsist on herbage, leaves, and tender roots, and to climb into trees. He lived to the age of seventy-three. His face was not ugly or disagreeable, and he had a look that might have been called sensible and sagacious for a savage. He was never mischievous, but had a gentleness of manner. He was extremely good-tempered, except in cold and gloomy weather. His passions seem not to have been developed. In his first years, as we may suppose, he never had occasion to get angry with any one. In after life he was not easily provoked, he did no violence, except at first to tear the bed-clothes that were irksome to him.

At the other end of the scale we will place

Sir Isaac Newton; the discoverer of the nature of fluxions, of the composition of light, and of the law of gravitation; the distinguished professor and able Master of the Mint; the man who, "with a comprehension which embraced at one view the meaning of every subject to which he directed his attention, and overleaped as trifling all the difficulties that had arrested the progress of other philosophers, was thus able to shed a lustre on the age in which he lived, and the country which gave him birth, and to introduce such astonishing improvements, and make such stupendous discoveries in science, as would each of them individually have bestowed immortality."

What was the cause of the difference between these two men? I answer, education. And solely that. If we examine the case in all its parts, and explore the secret springs, we shall conclude that the essential and fundamental cause of difference was simply education. Of course I do not employ the term *education* in precisely the way we are wont to use it, as implying certain specific forms and modes of instruction. We speak of college education, and common-school education, and the cause of education, but we always use the word relatively, not as distinguished from absolutely no education, but from a low or poorer sort of education. Everybody in civil society is to a certain extent educated. There is a civilized and an uncivilized education. The New-Zealander educates his child not less than the Englishman. Perhaps a better word than *education* is *culture*. Herein are also suggested social influences.

I mean by it all those agencies and means whereby the faculties are developed, the mind informed, and the character moulded. I say, then, the whole difference between the wild boy and Sir Isaac Newton was education. Of course the latter may have possessed stronger natural mental powers, he may have had an innate mathematical tendency. On the other hand, Peter may have been endowed with more vivid imaginative powers, and deeper affections.

If seen side by side, infants of a week old, you would have discerned no difference between them. Their complexion, their shape, their crying, are all alike, their wants are alike; the same helplessness, the same need of tender care, marks the condition of them both. At a month's age, they would both smile to you in the same way, fling out their tiny arms in similar life, and go quietly to sleep by similar rocking. But Peter is left in the forest, and abandoned to the maternal instinct of a brute beast. Isaac is trained up in his father's house. "His mother bestows a particular care on his education." At twelve he goes to a grammar school, at eighteen to college. When under the instruction of the famous Isaac Barrow, he begins to apply himself to mathematics. In infancy, withal, he is baptized or solemnly consecrated to the religion of his country and his God, and at an early age he became a communicant in the Church of England. We see in the one case education, or culture, beginning its work; in the other, an entire neglect of everything of the sort.

Here, then, are two impressible human natures, the

one the fortunate subject of impressing agencies, the other a derelict, and absolutely without them. Both have religious, moral, and intellectual faculties. In Isaac these are exercised, in Peter left dormant. Isaac's spirit is born, he undergoes regeneration. Peter's remains as it was in his mother's womb.

Let us notice the progress of events a little more in detail. Peter, we are told, never learned to speak. Isaac soon spoke his mother tongue. Peter was taught no language, Greek or Hebrew, English or Indian. This faculty of speech, language, the use of language, is purely a thing of education. Peter could only utter sounds like those of a wild animal, as Mademoiselle Leblanc imitated the various cries of birds. Peter had a tongue, and throat, and the natural functions of speech, only there was no mother to teach his infant lips to try their powers.

We are all educated into language. This gift of speech is one of the most wonderful with which the Creator has endowed us. Yet it must be educated, drawn out. If left to itself, absolutely, it would never act. Children brought up on a solitary island by a dumb nurse, and other similar instances which are recorded, are proof of this. There are some who speak Chinese, there are others who speak Italian; with certain people the entire language is German, in other parts of the earth French prevails. How is this? People are so educated. There is no other explanation. The reason why you and I speak English, while we cannot understand a syllable of Arabic, is, that we have been educated into the English language, and not into the Arabic.

Now philosophers say, we think in words. I believe this is so. If you watch your own thoughts, I believe you will find them clothed in words. We Americans think in English words. A Chinese thinks in Chinese words. The greater our vocabulary, the greater is our copiousness of thought. A child never begins to think very intelligibly until it begins to talk. You cannot very well think, "Our Father which art in heaven," until you can say the words, "Our Father which art in heaven." Well, Peter had no words, and how could he exercise thought? He never heard the words, father, mother, God, Christ, truth, beauty, love, and how could he think those thoughts? And if he could not think those thoughts, how could his mind or character mature? Sir Isaac's mother taught him all those words, led his infantile organs along until they could distinctly utter them, and she explained the ideas that belonged to those words, and so educated her child into the words and into the thoughts of father, mother, God, Christ, truth, love, and beauty.

This fact of having the English language, and of having the ideas with which the English language is full, is purely the result of education. And it is a process, for the most part, that begins in infancy. Sir Isaac went on being educated more and more. He exercised his faculties, he acquired knowledge, a new intellectual consciousness was awakened within him; his soul was being born day by day. Peter had nobody to lead him along; as I said, he could only follow the beasts with whom he herded. He climbed trees, as they did, and walked on all fours, and dug roots, and slept on the grass.

Did not God love this poor wild boy? He did. But God has so constituted things, has made human beings so dependent one on another, has so bound the child to its mother, that if, in our tender years, we be cast off, there is no hope for us. Was Peter's nature depraved? Not in the least. He was simply neglected. He had powers in him that might have been cultivated into what we call intelligence and reason, into religion and worship, into habits of economy or efforts of art, but these powers were left dormant.

An infant is not developed, but its nature is such that, if left like a plant in the shade, its true character will never appear. This is a law of things, an eternal law, an inexorable law that circumscribes us. Here is a kernel of corn; it is sound and good; but if I never plant it, it will never grow. If I throw it into a cold, dark, damp place, it will moulder and decay. If I plant it in a sterile soil, it will grow but poorly. If I plant it in good ground, and do not cultivate it, its produce there will be small.

Peter was a kernel of corn, as it were, cast aside to moulder and die. Sir Isaac Newton was a similar grain, planted in good ground, and thoroughly cultivated.

No, Peter was not depraved. Even the beasts that were his companions had not taught him malevolence or trained him to cruelty. He was quite mild and inoffensive. Peter had the organs of speech, but because they were not cultivated in infancy, he could never learn to speak. This is a peculiar law of the human system. The organs seem to become indurated, if not used; their elasticity is lost, and

even their sensibility perishes. He had the power of reading; but from the same cause, though he was sent to school, he could never learn to read. He had the organ of reverence, which, cultivated, would have made him a religious man, but, uncultivated, left him as a dumb beast. He had the capacity for filial love, but, from the same cause, he seemed to have no idea of father or mother, and not one sentiment proper to childhood.

Newton walked in paths of philosophy, while Peter burrowed in thickets in summer and in the chimney-corner in winter. Newton's mind comprehended "satellites, planets, and suns hanging on their centres in the arched void of heaven, and systems connected to each other by the revolution of comets, all floating in the boundless inane"; while Peter's mind was as a stagnant pool cooped in the recesses of his heavy frame. Newton bowed in awful reverence to the God of the universe; Peter knew no superior but the rude farmer in whose custody he was placed. Newton passed away shedding a blaze of light upon the globe he inhabited; Peter died an object of curiosity, as a monster of nature. All this difference, I repeat, was owing to education or culture. This is what education does.

By education, I of course refer not merely to what the school-teacher may impart by the drill of lessons, but to that almost endless combination of influences which touch and affect the human mind in the civilized state. It includes not merely what was done for Newton, but what he did for himself; not only opportunities, but the diligent use of them. The

powers are acted upon, indeed, but they are also self-acting. But this is to be observed, — unless we are the passive subjects of exterior culture in our first years, we are not able to become self-culturists in after-time, looking, I mean, at humanity in the extreme instance of this forest child.

At opposite ends of the scale, then, we see Peter the wild boy, and Sir Isaac Newton the philosopher, and this contrast and wide separation are owing to education. This might have made Peter the philosopher, and the want of it degraded Newton into the wild boy. Between these two range the great majority of human beings, whose places are graduated according to their culture, or education.

Our conclusion is, that the great law of life, of progressive, growing life, of life considered as made up of what we do and what we are, is education.

Let me take another instance; not of two individuals, but of one individual in two states, or at one end of the scale at one time, and at the other at another. It shall be Laura Bridgman. You know about her, and I need not amplify her history. She was a sprightly infant with blue eyes, but disease, in the space of two years, made her blind, deaf, dumb, and with only a slight consciousness of smell or taste; her faculties, her speech, her reason, her affections, her industry, her progress, became thus, as it were, sealed up for ever. Yet she was not, like the wild boy, cast off from human society, and reduced to the lone pupilage of beasts and woods. She had a home, and a mother that loved her; and she had one sense left, that of touch, and through it she re-

ceived impressions and ideas, and by this her mind was in a slight degree affected. In other words, she received a little education.

But Dr. Howe took her in charge, and contrived ways for reaching her faculties more nearly and intimately. He taught her a rude kind of language; he taught her to read and write, and knit and sew. "So strong," says Dr. Howe, "seems to be her natural tendency to put on the garb of words, that Laura often soliloquizes in her finger language. She has great thirst for knowledge, a quick perception of the relation of things. In her moral character it is beautiful to observe her continual gladness, her keen enjoyment of existence, her expansive love, her sympathy with suffering, her conscientiousness, thankfulness, and hopefulness. She keeps a diary, and she makes twine bags. Her countenance has improved, and beams with intelligence." From a condition bordering upon idiocy, she becomes an intelligent woman; from staring vacancy, her face grows radiant with expression.

This, too, is a result of education. Education carries this unfortunate person from one end of the scale to the other. By a fixed law, certain things acting upon the mind quicken and develop it. By the same law, the mind thus brought into activity goes on to make greater progress.

In passing, let us notice this striking fact. Regarding those children of the wilds, lost or deserted human offspring, foundlings of nature, the foster-sons of wolves and bears, it is found that, unless the work of education begins before the age of puberty, it can-

not be prosecuted at all; or if it is, the success is very trifling. The faculties become too deadened to be resuscitated by human means. Victor, the savage of Avignon, could be made to utter only a few exclamations and unimportant words.

We become what we are educated to be. This is the great law. But this does not make us irresponsible. Responsibility increases just in proportion to the light we have. In proportion as we become educated, is a new consciousness of power, a new sense of obligation, kindled within. Yet in some things are we wholly passive and unconcerned. I am not answerable for the fact that my education was in the English language, and not in the French; that my religion is the Christian, and not the Jewish. These are things in which I have normally neither lot nor part. To me it was a pure fatality whether the government to which I owed obedience was a monarchy or a republic. A Mohammedan is not to be blamed for being a Mohammedan. "In every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him." The point of moral responsibility, in all situations, ages, dispensations, is just here; do we live up to the light we have? But we become what we are educated to be. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

I have already intimated that education, in the sense in which I now use the term, is not mere teaching. It is not the common school, not the Sunday school, not the pulpit, nor the press, alone, which educates. The work begins away back in the cradle;

it begins with the first look the mother gives her child, the first kiss she impresses on its lips, and the first word she speaks in its ears. It includes every species of thing that addresses and excites our natural sensibilities. It comes down in those impalpable shapes of past life, past traditions, past customs, that hang as an atmosphere over the community in which we live.

As soon as Laura Bridgman could walk, "she began to explore the room and house, and feel the form, density, weight, and heat of every article she could lay her hands upon"; and these were the things that helped educate her. She felt of her mother's hands when she was knitting, and so learned to knit herself. Peter saw the beasts around him eating raw flesh and walking on all fours, and that became his education. Nature helps to educate us. If Laura's blue eyes could have been visited by the blue heavens, her interior life, her sensations, her whole moral being, would have been very different. Public sentiment, the laws of the land, the dignity of civilization that surrounds us, contribute to this educating process.

We scarcely realize how we are being every day insensibly educated. A child is thus continually acted upon by a parent. Here are persons now before me with particular views and feelings that they have thus imperceptibly acquired from their mothers. Then, too, we go on to educate ourselves in ten thousand ways. The exercise of a particular faculty prompts us to use it again. Any given enjoyment leads us to seek the means for the repetition of that

enjoyment. As the spiritual and intellectual faculties are excited into action, conscience arises in the breast, and the sense of right and wrong is felt. Truth educates us, and error educates us.

Now I take Christianity to be the grand and divine system for the education of the race. There were some educational properties in Judaism, and all the ancient religions. But Christianity is chief and final. The Mosaic law was a schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ; a primary school, conducting to the high-school. I understand that Christ's doctrines and example, his life and death, are addressed to human nature to develop and unfold it. Not only does this system communicate ideas, it arouses reflection, it invigorates the faculties and perfects our being. There is a natural susceptibility in the human heart to Christian truth, as there is to any other truth. Some proficiency has been made by the race under every species of religious culture. That anticipated by Christianity is the highest. The light ever shined in the dark place, but Christ was a flood of light thrown over the world. The object of culture is to create growth, to nourish the latent vitality into vigor and fruit. The object of the Christian culture is to arouse and perfect the true life in our souls.

Laura Bridgman had one birth of the flesh, which was flesh. She had another, or new birth, of the spirit, when her faculties were reached, and her conscience, affections, and reason began to be developed. So Mademoiselle Leblanc experienced a new birth when she began to speak. Ye must be born again. Christianity, in its educational and culturing process, not only points, but leads, to regeneration.

Look at Christ how and when you will, — buffet-
ing with temptation on the mountain, teaching the
people by the sea-shore, plucking wheat on the Sab-
bath, taking children into his arms, rejoicing in a
serene peace when Lazarus is raised, weltering in
agony as his own death draws near, — and he is a
something of immeasurable force, divine and human,
addressed to my heart and mind, my conduct and
steps, to train me also into a divine life. The whole
is a system of discipline and instruction, designed
for the perfection of the individual and of the race.
Christ was supernatural in so far as God was espe-
cially with him; but the laws by which he acts on
the mind are natural. The upshot of the whole is,
that we are to be *educated into* Christianity. We
are, from our earliest years, to be trained in the nur-
ture and discipline of Christ. Or we are to be nour-
ished in the discipline and instruction, in the knowl-
edge and memory, of Christ.

The Christian Church is a great school for the in-
struction of the race, a seminary in which the youth
are to be taught divine truth, and where those of
mature age are to advance to perfection. A local
church is as a town school, where the teacher is the
minister, and all the parishioners are scholars. Not
that these analogies cover the whole ground, by any
means. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ, all
kings and priests unto God. We are all, pastor and
people alike, learners, disciples of the Great Teacher.
But throughout the whole is an educational, cul-
turing idea, improvement of character, development
of faculties, growth of soul, and perfection of nature.

The great commission still is, "Go, teach, instruct, educate all nations." Christ announced himself as a *Teacher*, Instructor, Educator, sent from God.

Man is not depraved ; that is not why Christ came. But man without culture sinks to Peter the wild boy. Man with an erroneous culture becomes a Thug of India. Man with an imperfect culture is Saul of Tarsus. Man with the highest culture is Paul, Newton, Fénelon. Christianity does not address man as a sinner merely ; it addresses him as a being to be instructed, as a being with faculties to be unfolded, with a life to be nurtured, with energies to be directed. It addresses him with truth, and comes to him with love. It finds Mary weeping, and it comforts her ; Matthew idle, and sets him to work ; Nicodemus erroneous, and enlightens him ; the Pharisee hypocritical, and upbraids him. It never addresses childhood as a sinner, but as the very type and semblance of its own kingdom.

We become what we are educated to be. If we are not all Christians, it is because we have not been educated rightly. But education consists of two parts, what is done for us, and, secondly, what we do for ourselves. It may sometimes be that what has been done for us is right, while what we do for ourselves is wrong.

If our children are not growing up Christians, it is because they are not being rightly educated. We may educate them rightly, others may educate them wrongly. We may give them a good education in the way of instruction, and a bad one in the way of example. We educate by remissness as well as by

fidelity. Our inconsistencies go towards the training of our children, as well as our integrity. If there are strange and absurd notions afloat touching religion and its ordinances, life and its enjoyments, it is because people have been indoctrinated with these ideas. They would never have got them in any other way.

The Christian Church, in this community, seems to have lost the idea that its great object is to educate the race, to train souls from infancy to age in divine knowledge. It proceeds on the supposition that all men are born with a nature totally depraved, and that its function is to *change* human nature, not to culture and inspire and elevate it. It does change a few, and these few, detached from all the relations of life, it gathers into one, keeps them separate from the rest, and makes a kind of school of them, and calls them disciples, that is, learners. All the others, the vast majority of our congregations, are regarded simply as sinners; they are not in the school of Christ,—even the little children are not in it. The Unitarian Church itself, while, indeed, it has denied the doctrine of a depraved nature, has never yet, in all fulness and positiveness, gathered its children to the central nurture and admonition, the blessing of which itself enjoys.

It is as easy for children to be educated into Christians, as into Jews, or Mohammedans, or Hindoos. Indeed, if we may trust St. Paul, Christianity is a less burdensome and easier religion than Judaism. It is more humane and liberal and spiritual, and is more recommended by all the better sentiments of

our nature. What person amongst us would not rather be a Christian than a Jew? Who would not rather undertake to educate his child a Christian than a Jew? Children are educated Jews. Children are not educated Christians.

It is utterly impossible for any church to do its work in the world until it annihilates these traditional and purely conventional distinctions to which I have referred. It must be one common school for the culture of the souls of every man, woman, and child in the parish.

My friends, we can educate our children into Christians if we have a mind to do it. I do not forget the agency of God. This is the great work which God would have us do, what he commands us to do, and what he has promised to bless. We are in the way of God's will when we do our part. I cannot do this alone, nor you alone, but you and I can do it. We have all, parents and children, in cant phrase, got to belong to the Church, to be of it, every one of us, or we can do nothing. We have got to go to school, to belong to the school that the Church is; we have all got to assume the character of learners, scholars, disciples, or we cannot so be trained and educated. We can do just nothing, to have a collection, a gathering, called a school, when one hundred pretend to be scholars, and four or five hundred are no scholars at all. We are to help educate, train, culture one another, — parents their children, husbands their wives, the pastor the people, and Christ the whole.

By education is meant not merely preaching;

every church service has an effect on the soul, — its worship as well as its instruction, its communion, and its baptism. The soul wants food just as corn does to make it grow. Christ is the great aliment. We must all, children and old folks, feed on Christ; *either outwardly or inwardly we must all partake of the communion.* No man can grow up a Christian, who is not, either outwardly or inwardly, a communicant. I never expect to see a solitary soul saved, or experience the true Christian life, who does not partake of the body and blood of Christ. The Sabbath, the Sunday school, the birds and brooks, all, all help to culture the soul.

“Do the best we can, there are error and vice in the world that may counteract our endeavors.” Certainly, certainly. But we have two things to do: first, to train our children in virtue; second, so train them that they will resist the temptations to vice. First, train them into truth; second, so train them that they will be armed against all the assaults of error. There is yet a third thing: we have so to train our children that a part of their mission in this earth will be, not alone to be virtuous and truthful, but to promote virtue and truth, and aid in overcoming vice and error.

My friends, you see at a glance the whole object of this Christ-Church, — why I am settled here in the ministry, why we have Sabbaths, and Sunday schools, and singing, and praying, and communing; it is that we may all be trained up Christians, that we may be growing Christians; and especially it is that the children may all be brought up in the nur-

ture and admonition of the Lord. The question is not, how wicked a man is; that is no question at all. The only question is, Are we willing to be made better, to improve, to receive divine culture? In establishing a common school, you never ask how ignorant a boy is. The more ignorant, the more need of schooling. Without schools, the whole nation would sink into barbarism; without true Christian schools, we shall all sink to the lowest end of the scale of being. It is as easy to train up a generation of Christians as a generation of sceptics and blasphemers, if we will only set about it.

I have said, the grand difference in human beings is that of culture, culture beginning in infancy. I do not say there is not a diversity of gifts, and of temperaments, and of climates, and of social positions, if you will; but all these diversities sink into nothing as compared with those generated by culture.

In the Church we shall have some active in good works, some eloquent with tongues, some free with their money, some to deliberate and some to execute, but we shall be Christians still, one Holy Spirit pervading and uniting the body.

I have said, we think in words. We begin to speak and we begin to think, we think more and more words. We think in the words we hear, in the words our mother teaches us. What is this? What an affecting position! What an amazing responsibility! What words, O ye fathers and mothers, will you have your children think in, and exercise their thoughts upon, and revolve in their minds? I

will give a brief answer. Every child must begin to think in such words as these: I am of the kingdom of God; I am a Christian; God is my Father in heaven; Christ is my lover and friend; I am to grow up a Christian.

“Was there ever a time,” said I to a deacon’s son, brought up in the very presence of the family altar, brought up in full view of the Lord’s table, — “was there ever a time when you could say, God is my Father in heaven; I am his child?” “No, never,” said he. He had not those words to think in, to mould his spirit in, to leaven the whole substance of his nature. “No,” said he; “I was brought up to feel that if I met with a change, and had a new nature, then I could call God my Father, and myself his child; but that, till then, I was only the child of sin and Satan.” Those were the words given him to think in, given him by his own father, and his Sunday-school teacher, and his minister. Within six months I have conversed with a score of just such people, having just such words to think in, and to conform their souls to, — words of death, of damnation, of despair. Is it a wonder nobody prays, nobody enjoys spiritual life? We have corrupted all the fountains of a true life in infancy.

Words to think in, — Peter had no words, and he never thought. Suppose Dr. Howe had taught Laura Bridgman, in her finger language, these words: “I am an undone sinner, my heart is depraved, I hate goodness, God is not my Heavenly Father. I can never be a disciple of Christ till my nature is changed!” The result would have been

just such a result as is now produced on the minds of all the boys and girls of Christendom.

We are all born into the world just as helpless as Peter the wild boy, just as helpless as Laura Bridgman, and we must even take the words that are given us.

SERMON XI.



“WE THINK IN WORDS.”

AS HE THINKETH IN HIS HEART, SO IS HE.—Prov. xxiii. 7.

FROM the turn things have taken with us result certain aspects and relations, perhaps of a novel, but certainly of a grave and interesting character.* You have become a Church, and your children are recognized as in it because they are your children. We are a company of adult and infant disciples, scholars of Christ. What then? Is that the end? Nay, friends, it is only the beginning. Now the great work of our life fairly commences, to be continued through time, and to perpetuate itself in the endless years of our futurity. We come together, pastor and people, to aid one another in this work. From Sunday to Sunday it is to go on, in all the routine of our days its fruits are to be developed and exhibited more and more. What is this work? The answer may be variously phrased, but it all comes to this. The salvation of our souls, the maturity of

* See Appendix, Note B.

our characters, spiritual life in Christ. The whole is well enough expressed in the language of our Church: "The highest Christian culture, spiritual birth and growth, and the perfection of our natures." In a word, to be Christians. This explains the object of our whole movement, and is the true reason of our becoming a church, and assuming the position in which we are. "We will seek to train our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"; nourish them in the schooling and remembrance of Jesus. The children are to be trained up for God and Christ. The results we aim at are spiritual life, or the life of God in the soul. The means by which we would reach them are nurture, culture, education.

I lay this down as a general principle, that the means or method whereby we are to attain the highest Christian realizations, or the true end of our being, is education, culture, or nurture. There are three things: first, the method by which we shall act, education; second, the objects on which we act, immortal souls; third, the end for which we act, the Christian maturity of those souls. Each child of the Church is as a plant just sprouting in our gardens. It has vital energies, but it needs cultivation, — and this includes nourishment, tillage, and every species of attention, — in order that it may produce flowers and fruit, which are its proper destiny. Education, then, will include feeding the children with spiritual food, nourishing their religious affections, developing the higher faculties, repressing whatever is evil, and encouraging whatever is good. The children, indeed, have vital energies, but their

innate vitality requires to be reinforced by the life of God, or they will come to naught, even as Peter the wild boy did, — even as a plant does if it be never watered.

By education, I am aware, I use a scholastic rather than a theological word, and I may be misunderstood. Let me explain. By this term I do not mean mere teaching or preaching, but all those methods whereby the soul may be reached and moved to due action. It means example, social influence, historical association, the Bible, nature. We educate the soul, we cultivate a plant. Cultivation is a right application of culturing agencies. We hoe the weeds, loosen the soil, apply fertilizers, all that the plant may grow and bear fruit. So we work upon the soul; we arouse its faculties, supply it with truth, remove its errors, that it may grow and bear fruit. We would give to the children a family altar, the Sabbath, pulpit instruction, worship, the communion. We would pray with them, and teach them to pray; we would furnish them with good books; we would offer them the facilities of the Sabbath school. All these are things education would do.

Does this scheme forget the agency of God? By no means. It gives God to the children, his knowledge, his love, his character. We claim it is the very way God would have us adopt, and feel that it is that which his blessing will follow. But should we not rather seek to sanctify than to educate the children? They are already sanctified, consecrated to God, by birth and by baptism. The children of

believers, the Apostle tells us, are holy. But we would educate them into complete and full sanctification. The perfection of the soul cannot be reached, we insist, without training. The whole system includes prayer, and self-examination, and meditation, and attendance on the ordinances.

With this brief explanation, let me enter upon the general subject. I opened it the last Sabbath. I showed we became what we were educated to be, and that we might become Christians by being educated to be Christians; that if you train up a child in the way he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it. I purpose at the present time to take up some particulars of the general law. I said, we think in words. Let us attend to this. It is the opinion of philosophers that we think in words. M. Lavoisier quotes the observation from Condillac, and Dugald Stewart indorses it, that we think only through the medium of words. At least, if I rightly apprehend what has been written on the subject, it is agreed that all processes of reasoning are conducted in this way. If you recall the movements of your own minds for a day or an hour, I think you will perceive that your thoughts are continually clothing themselves in words.

There are certain qualifications to the general rule. We think in words that we hear; that is, we think in the sound of words. We think in words that we see; that is, we think in the sight of words. One who cannot read, and knows not how words are spelt, is thinking in different words, so to say, from one who can read. I am not sure, also, that we do

not think in the images of things we have seen. We may think of a waterfall, landscape, twilight, in the images of those things already lying in the mind. We think chiefly through words conveyed to us by the eye, the ear, and the imagination. A blind person cannot think in words conveyed by the eye; or, as I might say, in visible words. A deaf person cannot think in words conveyed by the ear; that is, in audible words. A deaf mute cannot think in words conveyed through either medium, and as most words are conveyed in one way or the other, such a person has but few words to think in. Laura Bridgman was deaf, dumb, blind, and with only a limited sense of smell, and she had almost no words to think in. Her sense of touch was exquisite, and all her words were of the tangible sort. That is, the few words she had took the shape imparted by touch; she could have no other thoughts but those of density, elongation, heat, roughness, &c. After Dr. Howe had taught her the finger language, she was often found talking to herself with her fingers. Peter the wild boy had eyes and ears and all the senses, but he never heard or saw a word, and of course never spoke a word, and had no words to think in. Some cries of animals he had heard, and these he imitated. Perhaps a cry for hunger; and when he was in the woods, it may be he uttered that cry, and perhaps thought in it. He saw water, trees, stars, and these images came into his mind, but only as mere blank surfaces.

In my discourse a year or two since, on language, I showed it was impossible to invent a language. If persons have no language given to them, they never

come to the possession of one, since they cannot create one of themselves. But again, if we have no words we have no ideas, or as a general thing our ideas and thoughts are proportioned to the words we have. Thought is developed along with the power of speech. Peter could never speak, and he had no thoughts, no true intellectual life. Laura Bridgman improved just in proportion as ideas were conveyed to her, or as her own capacities were developed ; and this was done by giving her words, that is, by clothing ideas in material outline and so communicating them to her through her sense of touch.

We think in words ; but we think in such words only as are given to us. We cannot get them of ourselves. In this matter, primarily and in the outset of things, we are perfectly helpless, passive. Our children think in such words as we give them, and no other. We may give them bad words or good words, suggestive or jejune, elegant or coarse, they are entirely at our mercy ; we overwhelm them as by an absolute fate. Our children think in English words, German children in German words, Indian children in Indian words ; and there is no help for it. By unalterable ordinance of the Almighty, it must be so ; our children cannot think in Arabic, nor an Arab's child in English. A blasphemer's children think in blasphemous language, a child born at the Five Points thinks in Five Points language, the child of a reverential, loving family thinks in reverential, loving language.

Next, as to the character. It is proven that the development of thought is proportioned to the de-

velopment of speech, and the development of character is proportioned to the development of thought. Hence the truth of our text. As a man thinketh, so is he. But we think in words, and in such words as are given to us; hence it follows that the character of every human being is more or less determined by the words that shall be given him. This at least applies to the state of childhood and infancy. This appears in the cases I have cited. Peter, in a sense, had no character, no moral, or religious, or intellectual character; no aspirations, no humility, no hope, no reason; I mean next to none. The germs of these things were all in him by nature, but they were never born. He had no regeneration or birth of the spirit. He conformed in all respects to the brute beasts with whom he dwelt.

But to show how character depends on the words we think in, consider what is in those words. Almost all the ideas the world has ever had, or ever will have, are comprised in words. History, science, theology, are contained in words. The Bible, the constitution of our country, are thus vocalized. Words are the gates that let into the soul the flood of ideas. “Language,” says Lord Bacon, “is often called an instrument of thought; it is also the nutriment of thought; or rather it is the atmosphere in which thought lives; a medium essential to the activity of our speculative powers; and an element, modifying by its qualities and changes the growth and complexion of the faculties which it feeds. In this way the influence of preceding discoveries on subsequent ones, of the past upon the present, is most penetrating and uni-

versal. The most familiar words and phrases are connected by imperceptible ties with the reasonings and discoveries of former men and distant times." "Language is the embodiment, the incarnation, of the feelings, thoughts, experiences, of a nation, yea, of many nations, and of all which through centuries they have attained to and won. It is the amber in which a thousand precious and subtle thoughts have been safely imbedded and preserved."

Words or language, I say, mould the character. If a language is rich in history, poetry, philosophy, the education or development of the child is proportionably rich. There is what is called Thieves' Latin, or the flash language used among robbers. Let us suppose these robbers to be married, and live in families, and talk their peculiar language to their children; these children begin to think in that strange, perverted dialect, and their character is insensibly shaped by it.

I say, language, or the use of articulate speech, tends to develop all the powers. I cannot say that a child does not think before it speaks; but as soon as it begins to speak, its thought is much more active and precise. Speech reacts upon thought, and thought upon speech. Words are signs or forms, or images of thought, and when you have given a child words, you have given it signs or forms or images to think in. A child thinks in words before it can speak them, because it hears and after a sort understands them. I cannot exactly describe the process, nor is it needful that I should. The words sink into the child's mind, and become pictures of the things to

which they belong. They enter into its moral consciousness and exert a stimulating power. The word *mother* carries with it the idea of mother, and the word remains in the memory when the object it represents is absent. As children begin to speak, the vocal organs are developed, and the use of these organs calls in play almost every faculty of the mind. To speak correctly, even a little child must think correctly. The use of one word rather than another implies that the power of analysis begins even in early years. Words do not merely convey information, they act silently upon the mental faculties; they are what we use in all moments of reflection. We reason in words, we compare in words, we resolve in words, we pray in words; I mean in these latent soul-words. Convictions and impressions, remaining with us, write their own names at full length on the tablet of the heart.

But to apply these things, how is it that one man grows up Peter the wild boy and another a Newton, one a Mohammedan and another a Jew? We say, it is primarily and fundamentally education; and education in this connection means the use of words, or the teaching of one set of words rather than another. A Mohammedan child hears Mohammedan words, a Jewish child Jewish words. These Mohammedan words are full of Mohammedan ideas, Mohammedan doctrine, history, theology; suggest Mohammedan images. These are a source of moral, intellectual, spiritual life to the child. Hence his life is Mohammedan life, and he grows up a Mohammedan man. So of the Jews. So of others. All these

nations, in the administration of their religion, begin with the cradle. The Jews were directed in this wise: “ Ye shall lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes; and ye shall teach them unto your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up; and thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thine house, and upon thy gates.” You see what provision was made for keeping the words of the Jewish religion always before and in the minds of the people, and these words were all communicated to the children, and these were the words from their first years those people had to think in; and it is no wonder they all grew up Jews.

I said in my last discourse, it was as easy to grow up Christians as to grow up Jews or Mohammedans, and as easy to train up a generation of Christians as a generation of Jews or Mohammedans. I said, if we were not at this moment Christians, it is because we have not been rightly educated, either in respect of what others have done for us, or what we have done for ourselves. And all turns upon this, in the infantile stage of things, in the first awakenings of moral existence,— the words we have to think in.

Recollect that your children have no words, and no ideas of which words are a sign; that they cannot acquire words of themselves; that they must take such as you or somebody may give them, and no others. They lie as helpless before your training as they ever lay

in your arms. If you were an Indian, they would receive your Indian words. If you were a Hindoo, they would receive your Hindoo words. They must not only receive your words, but the ideas that are attached to them. If you were a slaveholder, and should tell your little children, the negroes were a degraded race, that slavery was a good thing and decreed of God, they would receive these words and all the ideas they involve. As clay in the hands of the potter, so is every little child in the hands of its parents.

Everything depends on what is now done. Let us see what the Jew would do. He would teach his child that he was a Jew or Israelite, that he was in covenant with God, that he was holy, that the one God, who in the beginning made heaven and earth and supports all things by the word of his power, was its God. The child does not understand all this ; but these are the words it begins its moral life with, these are the words he thinks in : “ I am a Jew,” “ I am holy,” “ I am of the covenant,” “ God is my God.” These are the words that take precedence of all others in the child’s mind. These are the ideas that enter the susceptible, but, so to say, dormant soul of the child, and infuse into it their own life. These are the signs of things that enter the so to say empty brain of the child, and fill it with pictures. These are the words the child revolves in his mind, these are the words of his dreams ; they are the seed of his being, they enter into his character, and develop him into a full-grown Jew.

What do we do ? What do parents, and Sunday-

school teachers, and ministers, in this so-called Christian community, generally do? First I observe, we never approach children in the direct, positive way of the Jew or Mohammedan; we act hypothetically, hesitatingly, negatively. To start from the extreme Calvinistic or Augustinian side, and then pass from that to our own position: it is said by the Calvinist that God is three. For what purpose, or in what manner, no parent under the canopy of the sky can explain to the child. Now what sort of an idea is that for the child to think in, or mould his character upon? Next, as to God's paternal relation. God is your Father in heaven and you are his child, is the true idea; that is the positive form of the thing. But do children get those words? No; they are told, If you become good, if your characters change, if you get a new heart, then you will be God's child. Thus is the best side of the case thrown into hypothesis, and as such dealt out to the child. But there is a positive side to Calvinistic instruction. It is this. You are a sinner, you have done this thing wrong and that thing wrong; we do not know that you are of the elect; you are out of the covenant, you may die and go to hell. These are the words multitudes are giving their children to think in. “Sinner,” “wickedness,” “hell,” “God does not love me,” “no child of God”;—these are the words given them to dream upon, to see new meanings in, to enter their natures as the quickening agent of their moral life.

Now as to our own children, the great fact, my friends, is, — (although we mean nothing wrong, no-

body does,) — the fact is, we have borrowed our habits of instructing children from those about us ; we improve upon the method, as perhaps we fancy, we soften its rigors, but we embody many of its essential features. We have very little directness or positiveness of style ; we never dare approach our children in the full, open, frank way, the Jew or the Mohammedan does. For instance, we do not tell our children they are Christians, that God loves them and they are God’s children, that they are holy, that they are of the Church, or in the covenant, or Christ’s disciples. We too approach them hypothetically ; a vision of something, we hardly know what it is, like the birds by the way-side, is always catching up the truths we sow, before they take root. But there is no neutral ground, we must tell our children they are Christians and holy, or that they are not ; we have got to give them either positive Christian words to think in, or their opposites. I suppose we generally put the case problematically, and tell children, if they grow up good they will be Christians, and God will love them. The Jew begins just the other way. He says to his child, you are a Jew, and you must act like one. He never says, If, as you grow up, you do right, then you will be a Jew. In other words, we are always implying in our own minds, or in the form of words we use, that some change or revolution in the future must ensue before the child can be a Christian, or holy, or a lover of God, or in the covenant.

Here, then, is that which diseases all our instructions, which takes their vitality out of them, and

which destroys their power over the character. We are educating children on an hypothesis, not on the direct word of God. They begin their days on an hypothesis, and continue and end them in the same way. “ If I should meet with a change,” — that is the current phrase. “ I may, I may not ; I will wait and see.” These are the words the child has to think in. We give him no proper foundation to rest upon. We do not plant him at once and for ever on Christ. The child wantons through the world. It never knows when it is a Christian, or whether it is or not. We fling its character out on a fleeting and uncertain future, as a swift stream, and it fetches up when and where it may. All our children are at this moment afloat, just as we started them, Heaven only knowing whither, or where they will ever land.

Now, what children need is positive, affirmative Christian words and Christian ideas. They need these at the very first dawning of intelligence, and such words must forestall every other kind of words. Such words children get under every other religious dispensation except the Christian. Such words they get with us, in every matter excepting Christian nurture. You tell your child she is your child, that you are her mother, that you love her ; these, in the family, are the rich, positive, potent words your children have to think in. You never address your child as a little girl of uncertain parentage, who, if she grows up good, and meets with a change, may be your child. You always say, You are my child, you are called by the family name, you belong to the family covenant, and now you must grow up a

good child ; you love me, I love you. These are the positive, affirmative words we give our children to think in, and to build upon. There are no *ifs* nor *may-bes* in the case, no problems, no unsettling of foundations. So in state matters, we always teach our children positively, affirmatively, that they are republicans, American citizens, in political covenant with their parents. We train them up in this way of thinking ; and when they are old, as a general thing, they do not depart from it. A man who violates the laws, who breaks the great political covenant, is looked upon as an exception, a monstrosity, with whom your child has nothing in common ; and you always teach your child to be thankful he has not been left to do such things. In Church or Christian matters, everything is reversed. “ We are all sinners,” “ We all deserve to be punished together,” “ We are all violators of the covenant.” These and such like words we teach our children in the earliest hour of their intelligence.

Here, then, is the bitter root of all we mourn over in contemplating the religious aspects of society ; here is the great underlying cause why we have not grown up Christians. We have instruction enough ; we have Sunday schools, catechisms, preaching, meetings ; but our children get no positive, direct, affirmative Christian instruction. I venture to say there are not ten children in this whole city, under ten years of age, who dare call themselves Christians. We are ourselves, whenever we approach them, always halting between two opinions. The children do not know, spiritually speaking, whether

they are children of God or children of the Devil. They have no true, positive, intelligible Christian words to think in. Here is your little babe, born of your blood, thrown into your sphere, open to your culture, in one sense blank space, a *tabula rasa*, empty of all words, all ideas, wholly depending on you for the turn its being shall take. It may with perfect ease become a Roman Catholic, a Quaker, an Indian, a believer in Juggernaut, a follower of Baal or of God.

An Indian, I say. Let me relate a piece of history. In Colonial times, the Indians made captive the family of the Rev. John Williams of Deerfield, Massachusetts, and took them to the wilds of Canada. These persons were all restored to their homes excepting the youngest daughter of Mr. Williams, Eunice, a child six or seven years old, who was adopted into an Indian family. She was taught the Indian language, inured to the Indian manners. She lived in a wigwam, wandered in the woods; she wore a blanket, leggins, and moccasins. She had no books, and, if she could ever read, probably forgot how. She was taught the Indians' religion, which at that time contained a mixture of Romanism. She married an Indian husband, and bore Indian children. In short, she had Indian words to think in, Indian ideas for her soul to develop in, and she became an Indian. Nor is this all. A few years afterwards, she, her husband, and family, probably at the intercession of her white relatives, came to Deerfield, where her father and brothers and sisters were then living. Her friends tried to induce her to aban-

don her Indian associations and ways, and return to civilized life. One Sunday she was persuaded to put on an English attire, to attend church in. She went to church, where her own father preached, in the forenoon. In the afternoon, says the historian, “she indignantly threw off her gown, and resumed the blanket. She would go back to the woods. No supplications or promises, no entreaties of parental affection, no earnestness of fraternal love, could induce her to remain.” Her own father! — she did not know him; and he, wretched man! must behold his child, this little pet child of his memory, this last child of a beloved wife who perished in those dreadful wars, this one darling of his heart and his prayers so long mourned over, so long lost, — he must now behold her alienated from him, separated as by those eternal barriers that divide the polar wastes from the culture and fertility of tropical life, and all because of education.

The same is true of our own children, — we may gain them, we may lose them. Every little child in this house may become an Indian, a Tartar, a Jew, or a Christian. Of course, it is presupposed that we not only begin, but continue, to train them in the right way. It is a singular, a mournful fact, that multitudes of parents among us commence nearly right with their children when they are young, but they soon slide off into the prevailing scepticism. There are mothers who teach their nurslings to pray “Our Father,” but in eight or ten years the habit is entirely abandoned; the mother does not know whether her child is a Christian or not.

As I said, all, primarily, depends on the words we give our children to think in. And these words must be positive, whole words, not indecisive, not half-way expressions. We must cease to be sceptics ourselves, and become believers. We must leave off this don't-know habit. Ask anybody, Are you a Christian? "I don't know." Are you a believer? "I don't know." This "don't-know" gets into the children, and, never knowing, they never are. You give your children indecisive words, and you render their characters indecisive. But we are so afraid our children have got to have a new nature before anything can be done, we dare not touch them. *We can give our children just what nature we choose to give them.* Let an Indian take your child, and he will give it an Indian nature; let a Gypsy take it, and he will give it a Gypsy nature. If you will take it and do by it as you ought to do, you can, with the blessing of God, give it a Christian nature. Not that the essential lineaments of its nature can ever be changed, only it can be developed in a Christian or any other way. Christian life can be infused into it, or heathen; Christian ideas can become the seed of its mind, or Jewish.

I said in my last discourse, that Christianity is the highest culture of the soul. It is the depository of the divinest ideas. It is a river of water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb, at which all may drink life into their being. It causes human nature to grow into the image of Christ. It is for us so to impart it to our children that their nature may assume this lofty type. This

is what I mean by giving our children what nature we please. All culture, Pagan or Christian, superinduces a sort of second nature on the normal conditions, or, more exactly speaking, develops the nature in the line of its peculiar ideas, whatever they may be. If the Christian nature be a secondary formation, we can superinduce that upon our children.

Christianity gives us positive words that we are to impart to our children to think in, or signs of positive ideas. Its Sabbath, its baptism, its Lord's Supper, are all signs of positive ideas. Its doctrines of the one God, the one humanity, of love, of purity, of peace, of forgiveness, are positive doctrines. In respect of children, Christ's words are most direct and explicit: “Of such is the kingdom of heaven”; “Feed my lambs.” “The promise is unto you and to your children,” says Peter. “Your children are holy,” says St. Paul; and he universally addresses the children as saints, believers, Christians. See how copious is the supply, and how momentous the application, of positive Christian words for the children. “This do in remembrance of me”; — this applies to every child as much as to any human being, if we would have it grow up a Christian. “I must do that in remembrance of Christ” — are words you must give your children to think in; such words must be lodged in their memories, be ruminated upon in their leisure, and give shape and stimulus to their spiritual growth. This is not to be qualified by conditions, or set aloof in the limbo of scepticism. And this was my aim a few weeks since, when I gathered the

children before me. "We are to become communicants," were the words I sought to lodge in their memories, and gave to them to think in.

But more, let every child be given this to say to himself, to commit to memory: "I am a Christian." I know, my friends, we start at this; we shudder as if we saw an apparition; we wonder what the world will say. But to this complexion we must come. Our children must begin life by being Christians; they have got in the very start to feel that they are Christians, and to be able to say so. "I am a Christian" — are the words they must have to think in; — the whole thing, no tampering, no half-way. Your child is either a Jew, a Pagan, or a Christian. Or, if you please to teach it so, it is neither one thing nor the other; and give it those words to think in and mould its character unto, and it will become just what our children are becoming, neither one thing nor another. "I am a lamb of Christ, Christ is my good Shepherd, I am to be fed by him"; — these words are to go explicitly, emphatically, into the mind of the child. They are to be among the first Christian words he hears, and to be among those forces whereby his whole being shall be wrought into the Divine image. That the child is a disciple of Christ, a student of the Divine, a scholar of the Infinite, he is in the same way to know, and this should constitute one of his earliest lessons.

I have said that children can be trained up Christians, and am now trying to indicate how the thing may be done; and I repeat, we must cease training them up sinners, or pagans, or nothingarians; we

must give them a positive Christian training. In other phrase, instead of uncertain, problematic, Satanic words, we must give them full and positive Christian words to think in. There is more contained in the text than we, perhaps, imagined. As one thinketh, so is he; and especially as the child thinks in the beginning, so will it afterwards be.

I continue the inculcation. “God is my Father in heaven.” “I am his child.” “God loves me.” “I love God.” Such, again, are examples of these positive religious words our children are to hear among the first words they hear at all about God, or see printed in their little primers. That children may grow up Christians, they must grow up in the nearest possible relationship to Christ. That they may do this, they must grow up with the feeling that Christ is their dearest, best friend, benefactor, shepherd, deliverer. For this, then, these blessed words must be given them to think in. Then the child must know that he is a branch, a twig of the vine, a member of the body; in other words, that he is, as we say, a church-member; that he belongs to the Church, and the Church belongs to him; that he is in and of the Church. These are words and ideas that the child must begin its thinking in: “I am a Church boy,” or “a Church girl.”

One reason why words are so powerful is because they are full of ideas. This word *Church*, — what a history, what a future, what grandeur, what recollections, what truths, it suggests! How it ascends into heaven! how it sinks into the deepest heart of earthly goodness! You give this word to your child to

think in, and to feel in; and by and by, in the course of nature, all its force vitalizes the mind of the child, and ere long all its vastness uplifts the being of the child to its own proportions. As it is now, we are, to speak strongly, killing our children quite, by keeping from them that which is so pregnant a word, so glowing with ideas; that is, by giving them neither the Church nor any true Church words to think in. Here, in this great universe, offspring of the one Creator, with natures whose true development would be divine, with capacities whose stretch no archangel knows, we everywhere are hesitating to have these little ones feel and know and think and say, "God is my Father; I am his child."

My friends, we become what we are educated to be. We may educate or train our children to be Christians, and they, in their turn, may do the same. Human nature is a garden; we may raise figs or thistles in it. We may cause it to blossom with roses or to gloom with deadly nightshade. Mothers, this work must begin with the cradle; it must enter the nursery, and lay its foundations deep and immovable in the first years of our being. The newborn child, a stranger here, the mystery of being all before it, looks out upon the universe, and, we may well suppose, asks after its conditions. Is there a God for the child? is there a Church for the child? is there a Christ for it? Then tell it so. Young mother, on whose lap lies your first child, that child's lips will never speak until you teach it; its mind will never think until you teach it; and it will speak such words as you give it, and think such thoughts

as you impart to it; and these words will go into its mind and form the pabulum of its growth. It may lisp the name of Mohammed, or Moses, or Christ, just as you shall teach it, and with these names will enter into its soul all those innumerable, but indefinable impressions that belong to them respectively. Its darling desire may be, as it grows up, to roam the forest with Eunice Williams, or to enjoy the quiet of a Christian home, just as it shall be taught. If you hesitate, the child will hesitate; if you doubt, the child will doubt. If you do not know if God is its Father in heaven, it will not know. If you do not know if it is a Christian, it will not know if it is a Christian. If you wait, it will wait. Wait, do I say? Nay, it will rush on somewhere; the world will give it words to think in, if you do not. Its development will hasten, God only knows how; it will grow up something, if not a Christian; and when you think it high time for it to be a Christian, it will perhaps be gone for ever beyond your grasp.

We have been hesitating, many of us, all our lives, about this whole subject of religion, Christianity, and the Church, and our children are exact copies of us, every one of them. Do you say, if we do as well as we can, others, the community about us, will spoil all our work; that while we are teaching our children good words to think in, they will fill them with bad words. There is some truth in this, but not all truth. Others may hinder our work, they cannot destroy it. But I have so charitable an opinion of the community around us, as to believe that, whenever it sees us really determined to train up our

children Christians, they will be, if not won to emulation, at least awed into silence.

By Christian instruction, in this connection, as I have said, I do not mean elaborate discourse, nor protracted lessons, but a few words, positive, vital, eternal; a few words out of that great repository of divine truth, the Bible; words that come flaming to us with a heavenly meaning in them; words that are to become the children's words; words that will begin to nourish the young soul, and will continue to nourish it when time shall be no more. The creed of the Mohammedans is very brief. "God is one, and Mohammed is his prophet." This is the initial word to that whole system; this is the simple nursery word that lays in childhood the foundation of that wonderful Mohammedan faith and life. Such words as these: "God is my Father, I am his child"; "Christ is my Shepherd, I am his lamb"; "The Church is my company, at its altars I commune"; "I am a Christian, and am to be like Christ," — brief, simple, — are enough, only they must be positive, direct, soul-sufficing, soul-illuminating words, the full force of which will grow upon the child, just as all nature does, so long as he shall live. These, and such words, must precede all other words, withstand all other words, and never give place to other words. No matter how much else the child may know, or how vast may be its acquisitions, these things must lie at the roots of his being. Away with this provisoing and balancing, away with this dilly-dally and hesitation. We make the word of God of none effect to the children; we deal with them at arm's

length ; we treat with them over the fence ; we imagine a great gulf between what they are and what they ought to be, instead of seeing the royal highway which marks the path.

You see, as I have told you, our idea of the Church does not trench upon the Family. The Family nowhere becomes so momentous as in the light of this idea. In one sense, all my burden of the Church I lay down at your feet, ye fathers and mothers. Nor is the responsibility a fearful one ; it is simply a pleasant and a natural duty. I say, give words to the children to think in. Christ is called the Word of God, as if God had spoken, and the voice took shape in Christ ; as if God had written a book, and the book were Christ ; as if God had graven something on the heart of humanity, and that something were Christ, the blessed WORD of God. Let the children think that Christ is theirs, that they are Christ's, and all are God's. Train them up to this conviction, and, if anything in the wide world will tend to form them Christians, I am sure this will.

Our children may sin and fall away as Peter did ; they may backslide and go into captivity as the Jews did ; but we shall have done our duty, we shall have discharged our responsibility. Yet we have the promise, if we train them in the way they should go, when they are old they will not depart from it. I know man is evermore liable to fall ; but the only course by which we can prevent our children from becoming sinners, is to train them to be Christians. The only way to keep them out of the world is to

train them up in the Church; the only way to save them from becoming the children of Belial, is to make them feel that they are the children of Christ. As they think, so will they be. If they think in words of sin, they will be sinners; but if they think in the words of Christ, they will be Christians.

SERMON XII.



THE SABBATH SCHOOL.

CHARGE THEM THAT THEY TEACH NO OTHER DOCTRINE, NEITHER GIVE HEED TO FABLES AND ENDLESS GENEALOGIES, WHICH MINISTER QUESTIONS, RATHER THAN GODLY EDIFYING, WHICH IS IN FAITH. NOW THE END OF THE COMMANDMENT IS CHARITY [LOVE] OUT OF A PURE HEART.— 1 Timothy i. 3-5.

In addressing myself to the teachers of our Sunday school, let me premise that I consider it a department of the Church, coming fully within the precinct of Church influences and authority; it is a sort of seed-bed and nursery of the Church. One of its leading objects is to prepare the children to be mature Christians, true Churchmen and Churchwomen. I hold that all who enter the Sunday school do, to a certain degree, commit themselves to the Church, and to a Christian life. They and the Church assume certain mutual obligations to each other. A teacher in this important province of the Church, as he is a nominal Churchman, so also ought he to be a sound Christian. He undertakes an office in the Church, he proposes to instruct in the knowledge of Christianity, and he should be, in the words of the Apostle, blameless, vigilant, sober, apt

to teach, gentle unto all, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, showing himself a pattern of good works.

The office of the Sunday-school teacher is a kind of delegated pastorate. He deals with the undergraduates of religion, he takes the spiritual meat which is served to the people generally, and, so to say, cuts it up for the little ones. The great thing to be taught is Christianity; not in the artificial shapes that abound on every hand, but just as we find it in the simple text of Scripture. And when I say Christianity, I mean, of course, among other things, moral duties. These are a part, a vital and integral part, of what the New Testament contains. It is just as much a part of Christianity that the children should love one another, that they should be peacemakers, forgiving, honest, truthful, as obedience to any precept that can be found in the same grand system. Nor do I mean by the term Christianity to shut out all reference to a consideration of the wide field of illustration to be found in nature. He has the highest authority for availing himself of resources of that sort in the example of Christ himself, who walked with his disciples through the corn-fields and led them by the margin of the waters. Nay, Christianity cannot be perfectly taught, I think, except by the aids derived from the phenomena of nature. One who never saw or heard of the grass of the field, of the vine, or of the mustard-tree, could never explain intelligibly Christ's doctrine of God's providence, the Holy Spirit, or the kingdom of heaven.

It is incumbent on the Sunday-school teacher, who is, as we see, a Church or Christian teacher, a sub-minister of the Gospel, thoroughly to understand the Scriptures, and get as deeply as may be into the mind of Christ. With all our boasted research, freedom of investigation, improvement, progress, there is, after all, in this age, in this country, perhaps, a certain tendency to superficiality. We have superficial farmers, mechanics, artists, editors, lawyers, physicians, clergymen, and very likely superficial Sunday-school teachers. There is a want of a due understanding of the thing on which men undertake to act. The old plan of apprenticeship is out of vogue, and boys quickly come to be journeymen, and journeymen, masters. A Sunday-school teacher should understand his business. He should make himself master as far as practicable of what he teaches. That he may teach Scripture well, he should penetrate the meaning of Scripture. That he may teach Christ well, he should enter into the spirit of Christ. Simple adherence to question and answer in a text-book will not suffice. He must explain, compare, illustrate, and enforce.

The Gospel is not a simple book to us. It is wrapped like a mummy in countless folds of ignorance and mistake, and its fresh, beautiful life is smothered and wellnigh lost. Ages of misinterpretation obscure it. A superstitious light gleams about it. We approach it under the disadvantage of all the wrong education we have received from our childhood to this day. I could sometimes wish that the Sunday-school teacher, as well as others,

might for a moment forget that he had ever seen the Gospel of Jesus, so that he might go to it as a new book, a new history, that he might thus experience all the freshness and beauty of its revelations, and with unbiased mind and childlike heart endeavor to appropriate its great truths. It is of the highest importance that we should understand the New Testament, for the reason that to us it is the sole rule of faith and guide of life. We reject the commonly received creeds and formulas of churches about us, and betake ourselves to the simple word of God, in which all-important rules of duty and forms of faith are simply expressed.

The teacher should love to teach. He should cherish a deep interest in divine truth, in the souls of his pupils, and in all things connected with his vocation. There are difficulties to encounter, discouragements to face, and nothing but a hearty love of teaching can carry him through them all. He should devote a portion of every week to preparation for his Sunday's work. He should give specific attention to the Scripture lesson. If the life of Christ is his great theme, let him sympathize with Christ, and aim to communicate that sympathy to his pupils. Let him not tread indifferently on that holy ground, or pass coldly over those touching topics. Did Christ go down into Samaria? Where was Samaria? Who were the Samaritans? What was their relation to the Jews? Wherein lies the great interest of that particular movement of Jesus? Let the teacher deeply ponder on things like these. Is Christ preaching to the people? Let your own

heart be amazed at his doctrine. Does he pluck corn on the Sabbath day? Let the children understand from this that duty and right are not to be postponed to expediency and conventionality.

There is another point on which I wish to offer some suggestions. It is involved in the question whether you should teach the children doctrines. On the supposition that we have a right idea of the term, I answer, Yes, by all means. Let the children be indoctrinated. Let no child ever leave the Church Sunday school without being thoroughly informed in all the doctrines of the Church. But what do we mean by doctrines? As has been already indicated, I mean the simple Gospel of the Son of God,—all that of which the Gospel is at once the basis, essence, and repository. I mean Christian doctrines, that is, doctrines which CHRIST taught. I mean evangelical doctrines, that is, Gospel doctrines. I do not mean what ordinarily passes under the name of doctrines. I mean Gospel doctrine, which is simply Gospel teaching.

But do I mean Unitarian doctrine? I mean precisely that. And what is Unitarian doctrine? It is what Christ taught. Unitarian doctrines are Christian doctrines, evangelical doctrines, Christ's doctrines,—no more, no less. But does the question still return, What are Unitarian doctrines? The answer itself resolves into a question. Did CHRIST *teach* anything? Did *he* utter any important truth? Did *he* announce any great principle? If he did, that is Unitarian doctrine. Did Christ leave any enduring impressions on the minds of his immedi-

ate disciples? Did John, or Peter, or Martha, or Mary, derive any appreciable, interesting, or solemn lessons or ideas from him? These are Unitarian doctrines. Did they believe in anything, or have faith in anything? That is our belief, our faith. You are, then, to teach what Christ taught, and that is Unitarianism. I speak advisedly. It is the beauty and the boast of Unitarianism, that it takes off those folds which have been wrapped about the Gospel, exhumes the sacred page, and lets us have it in its original and undiminished glory.

Here, now, we come to an understanding of some things. In one of those creeds which, at some former time, I quoted to you, it is asserted that Christ and the Holy Spirit are God; and that is called a doctrine. In another, it is set down that man is totally depraved; and that also is called a doctrine. Such statements are pronounced Christian, evangelical, orthodox doctrines, and they are taught as such in the neighboring Sunday schools. Now, in this sense, we have no doctrines. We have no doctrines independent of and aside from the plain teachings of Christ, such as I shall insist those just referred to are.

Did Christ teach that he was supreme God? Granting that, to some minds, there are obscure hints of such an idea in the Bible, granting that there is here and there a passage not readily to be explained on any other hypothesis, still, did *Christ teach* that fact? That is the question. Did he clearly, plainly, professedly teach any such thing? Whereabouts? I have studied the New Testament

not a little, and I never saw the passage. He did teach some things clearly, plainly, professedly, and those we gladly believe; he did not teach the Trinity, and we do not believe it.

Again, as to total depravity; did Christ teach that doctrine? When and where? By coupling together every allusion to the wickedness and errors of man from Genesis to Revelation, you may possibly make out the semblance of such a doctrine; but did Christ teach it? How, then, can we? And here I may observe that the Romanists, the largest and oldest of the nominal Churches, do not pretend that the doctrine of the Trinity is taught in the New Testament. They hold it as one of the traditions of what they call the Church. This leads me to say, that all these dogmas belong to those "other doctrines" which Paul charged Timothy not to have taught. They belong to a class of "fables and genealogies," traditions of the elders, "which minister questions rather than godly edifying." Observe what a characterization is here! What a test by which we may know the true from the false. "Which minister questions." What questions, what disputes, there have been about these points of the Trinity and total depravity! How has the Church been in an endless ferment on these subjects! "A genealogy"! — how strictly does that term apply to this tenet of the Trinity, involving the generation of Christ and of the Holy Ghost; the question whether Christ was really God, or was generated of God, as light from the sun; and whether the Holy Ghost was derived from God the Father or God the Son, or both, — a

purely genealogical question! "Fables," too, — myths, — could the Apostle have described these things in more appropriate language?

But what is the great Unitarian doctrine? You mean, rather, what is the great doctrine of Christ, and of Christianity? or what did Christ most emphatically, elaborately, and plainly teach? The Apostle seems to furnish an answer to this question in our text. "Now the end of the commandment," he says, "is love, out of a pure heart." He cautions Timothy as to what should not be taught, and then impresses on him what is the sum and substance of all teaching and doctrine, namely, love out of a pure heart. This is the end of the commandment, the grand consummation of the whole matter; all vitality, all essentiality, all fundamentalness of doctrine and belief, is contained in this. This is the fulfilling of the law; and Paul elsewhere seems to speak as if he did not know there was any other commandment.

To return now to the question, Shall we teach the children doctrines? I reply, Yes! But what are doctrines? I have given you specimens of what are called doctrines, what are everywhere taught for such, and professedly believed. But they are what the Apostle calls fables and genealogies, what Christ calls traditions of men. They are not the genuine Christian doctrines; they are not Unitarian doctrines. I have just given an instance of a Unitarian doctrine, — love out of a pure heart; and this doctrine I want teachers in the Sunday school to teach. I want you to teach it as one of the great, cardinal

doctrines of the Unitarian Church, to teach it as a most vital, searching, paramount doctrine of Christianity. You should inculcate it as that on which all the law and prophets hang, for the voice of inspiration tells us it is so. The faithful teacher will tell the children how love to God and love to man fulfils the law; he will show chapter and verse in the Bible where it is said, "He that loveth is born of God"; he will impress upon their minds how this love is greater than faith or hope, greater than all conceivable things; he will demonstrate to them what are the fruits and evidences of it; he will instruct them in the methods of preserving, strengthening, and increasing this chiefest of Christian graces. In a word, he will indoctrinate them in this doctrine. He will so thoroughly indoctrinate them that they will all know the essential element and groundwork of their faith; and should any one ask them what they believe, or what is a doctrine of the Unitarian Church, they will at once and comprehensively reply, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and thy neighbor as thyself."

But while love is chief, it is only one of our doctrines. There is the great and goodly doctrine of the Divine Unity. This primarily means that God is one, that he has no equal. The teacher will show the child how the Bible asserts, and nature in all its manifestations confirms, this doctrine. But the doctrine of the Divine Unity means much more than this; it expresses other ideas besides the nature of God. Unity, Unitarianism, a most pregnant word, if you but consider its scope and amplitude, runs all

through the Bible. "Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one God." That is Unitarianism. We have one God, the Father, one Lord, Jesus Christ, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and over all and in you all. This, again, is Unitarianism. Unitarianism, Unityism, Oneness, all mean the same thing. This word Unitarian is a glorious word, of a vast and most comprehensive scope. "Unite" is from the same primitive, and the famous word "Atonement" is descended from the same stock. Christ prays that we all may be one together with him, and with God, — unitarianized, atoned. God would gather all things together *in one*, unitarianize all things. This universal communion is in our minds when we speak of Unitarianism; and such a consummation is what we desire when we plead for the indoctrination of the children.

Unitarianism, I say, pervades the Gospel; it is one of its reigning characteristics. There is no Trinitarianism in any part of it. Christ came on a Unitarian purpose, to unite, to atone all men, by bringing them into union with himself, and with God the Father of all. There is indeed none other God but one. We are baptized into one, united, Unitarian body, and we pray for the time when there shall be but one Shepherd and one fold. I am not quibbling in this use of terms; I disdain to play upon words. This is the solemn and deep meaning of things; and this spirit and purpose of unity, so dear to the heart of Christ, so emphasized by him in the development of his scheme of redemption, is what makes up my Unitarianism. Ask me to give up the word Unitarianism.

rianism! You might as well deprecate the fulfilment of that prayer of Christ wherein he so yearned for the unity of his disciples. Unitarianism has no taint of sectarianism. It stands for the absolute and universal truth of God. I would have the children, in this highest and holiest sense, in this evangelical and truly orthodox sense, in head and in heart, in sentiment and in life, unitarianized, — atoned, unified, united to God and Christ and one another, to the God of nature and the universe.

Unitarianism, as we define it, as we would have it taught, as it lies in the Bible, is no shallow thing, no half-way system, no cold dogma, no barren statement. It is life and spirit. It is like Christ, its great representative, unto us wisdom and sanctification and redemption. It rises, indeed, into the sublimest region of speculation; but it stays not there, it condescends to our very feet, it grapples with the whole of our being, the full circle of time and eternity. There is the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God, taught, illustrated, beaming like the sun, all through Scripture. There is the doctrine of universal brotherhood, — rare, precious, august doctrine of Christianity. There is the doctrine of the dignity, the worth of human nature, upon which the churches round about, the preaching round about, a thousand influences round about, are perpetually crowding, but which is to be reasserted and defended, and inculcated over and over again; a doctrine often declared and always implied in Scripture; implied in every law God has given, in every dispensation he has made; implied alike in cursing and beatitude, alike

in penalty and reward ; implied in the very fact of sin, in the possibilities of guilt, in all the heinousness of transgression, as well as in the beauty of holiness and the joys of virtue.

There is the doctrine of repentance, and the doctrine of regeneration, or the spiritual birth, the birth, growth, and maturity of the spirit.

There is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, in all the interest of its nature, and richness of its suggestions, so full of personal, practical, needed life to each one of us.

There is the doctrine of faith ; not altogether as an absolute sentiment, but connecting itself with every other doctrine and feeling.

There is the doctrine of election ; not a narrow, partial limitation of God's grace, but that large, liberal, comprehensive scheme of mercy, which embraced Gentile as well as Jew, and which is so luminously and cheerfully set forth by the Apostle Paul.

There is the doctrine of Christ's second coming, the reproduction of his image in the heart and life of the disciple, replete with valuable thought and stirring significance.

There is the doctrine of kindness towards wicked men, and patient efforts in the spirit of love to win them back to virtue ; the doctrine of compassion for the poor, the intemperate, the slave, the Indian, the oppressed, and the unfortunate of every name.

Time would fail me to enumerate a tithe of the glorious doctrines of the blessed Gospel of the Son of God. The Bible is full of them ; he that runs may read. Every word of Christ is a doctrine. Ev-

ery act of Christ is a doctrine. We are not turned over, we will not turn these children over, to musty, dry, cheerless, metaphysical fables and genealogies; we come rather to themes which drop as the rain and distil as the dew; we open to the fair page of heaven's own writ, and there enter upon subjects of most engaging interest which have been accumulating from eternity for the use of rational man. Let me urge upon you all a more familiar acquaintance with the Bible. And if you do not always find the doctrines of which I have spoken systematically and formally treated there, be sure they will be found appearing more or less distinctly in every lesson you may give out. Let them become clear conceptions, distinct ideas, in the minds of the children. Let them be impressed upon them as great central religious principles. Let them be intellectually understood and heartily believed. I would have every child as familiar with these great doctrines as he is with that fundamental political doctrine that all men are created free and equal, or with the arithmetical doctrine that multiplication is the reverse of division.

But what shall we do with those fables and genealogies to which reference has been made? Of course they are not to be taught, but to be sedulously untaught. They circumscribe us on every hand, they accost us at every turn,—Trinity and total depravity. I would have the mind of the child disabused in respect of these, and their corollaries. I would have those passages clearly explained in which any fancy such ideas to be taught. They are not the organic doctrines of the New Testament,

and have only been superinduced by the misinterpretations of men. Will anybody, dares anybody, affirm that the Trinity is a leading, or even a subsidiary, doctrine or teaching of Jesus? There is language, I know, that seems to imply the Roman Catholic notion of transubstantiation, that the bread of the communion really becomes Christ's body; there is language that seems to import that a child must really hate his mother; and language that apparently teaches that a righteous man shall always be a rich man, and the like. But, I take it, the intelligent teacher in these and all such cases will exercise common sense, and especially compare Scripture with Scripture.

This indoctrination is, in the last analysis, inchristianization; it is focalizing upon the mind of the child those heaven-born truths which are scattered all through the pages of nature and revelation; it is binding as with hooks of steel the soul and mind of Jesus to the souls and minds of the children.

The prophecy of Paul has been fulfilled, that the time would come when men would not endure sound doctrine, but, after their own lusts, should take to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they should turn away their ears from the truth, and be turned unto fables. By all the solemnities of God, by all the value of the soul, by Tabor and Gethsemane, by the cross and by the crown, are we bound to revive and to relume, to teach and to preach, the same sound doctrine of which the Apostle speaks.

SERMON XIII.



THE COMMUNION.

WHAT MEAN YE BY THIS SERVICE?—Exodus xii. 26.

THIS question refers to the Passover, an institution the origin of which is related in the chapter from which the text is taken, and one devoutly cherished by the Jews from the time of its foundation, fifteen hundred years before Christ, and still kept up wherever that singular race is dispersed over the face of the earth. At the time of its introduction, Moses says to the people: “This day shall be for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast unto the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and thy sons for ever. And it shall come to pass, when your children say unto you, What mean ye by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses.”

The universality of the observance of this sacrament among the Jews is a point worthy to be remarked. It was kept by men, women, and chil-

dren, indiscriminately ; families, villages, cities, united in the celebration. The blood of the paschal lamb was sprinkled on every house. All persons partook of the unleavened bread. So careful were they that the entire community should be included, and so fearful were they lest some should refuse to join in its celebration, that from a passage in Numbers it has been conjectured that, if any one should wilfully abstain from the service, he might be put to death. If an individual were sick, or on a journey, or otherwise unavoidably prevented from participation in it, he was not allowed to pretermitt it entirely, but only to postpone its due observance.

Our Saviour, we read, would keep the Passover with his disciples. A room was prepared, the proper materials were collected, and they all reclined together around the table. At that time, and under those circumstances, still preserving the great idea of the thing, he changes a Jewish into a Christian ordinance. He offers the bread, which represents his body broken, and the wine, wherein is signified his blood ; in other words, he invites a participation in that which symbolizes his entire sacrifice in life and death for the good of the world, which was the seal of the new covenant which God made through him with the whole family of man. It is there he says, Do this in remembrance of me. Accordingly, soon after his death, as we read, the disciples of Christ began to keep this festival, thus modified in its features and transformed in its intents, as a memorial of their Lord. And we know that the practice, variously understood and variously employed, has continued from that time to our own day.

We learn, moreover, from history, that in the first ages of Christianity, the observance of this Christian ordinance was as universal as that of the Passover had been among the Jews; that old and young, men, women, and children, belonging to what may be called the Christian, in distinction from the Jewish or Pagan community, united in its celebration. We are told that, in the first years of our faith, heads of families administered the commemorative bread and cup to their households, and parents to their children.

The practice of a general, not to say universal communion, prevails even now in a large portion of Christendom. We are wont to attribute the idea now so prevalent in New England, that only a select portion of a Christian congregation should be communicants, while the rest, practically the great mass, should keep aloof from this ordinance,—we are wont, I say, to impute this idea to our Puritan forefathers. But this is a great mistake. They, for the most part, regarded *baptism* as an introduction to the Church, and as they practised infant baptism, it so came about that the mass of the population, in their time, were church-members, and, of course, communicants. The custom which we are familiar with, and which has come to be so common, sprung up more than a century after the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth. It originated with Whitefield, at the time of the Great Awakening, so called, which he set in motion between the years 1740 and 1750. I do not say that questions touching this matter, which Whitefield determined, had not been agitated

before his day. Doubtless they had been. Some dispute had already arisen among the Colonial clergy; but Whitefield put a finishing stroke to it. It was a cardinal doctrine with him, that no man should be a communicant who had not been miraculously converted. From this period dates a series of events of no small interest to the New England churches. A tone was then given to the popular feeling that has lasted to the present hour. From it has resulted the singular, anomalous, and lamentable fact, that the number of communicants has been decreasing every year, until at this moment it bears a less proportion to the mass of the population, in New England, than ever before. In the year 1650, twenty years after the settlement of Boston, there were forty churches in New England, with seven thousand seven hundred and fifty members; a number which was about equal, I think, to the whole of the adult population. The innovation of Whitefield, introduced at a crisis of high religious excitement, and acting upon elements of the most ductile and plastic sort, corrupted and perverted the churches. Those who had the most repute for zeal and piety adopted it; the rest were stigmatized as secular and profane. No man was admitted to church privileges unless he could recount, with the precision of a ledger, operations which are declared in Scripture phrase to be like the blowing wind and the growing corn. The clergy assumed the jurisdiction of sacred rites. They received and they rejected whom they chose. Persons of sincere piety and spotless life were denied admission to the Church. The effect was, on multitudes

of minds, to render the Lord's Supper distasteful, and to create a belief that the ordinance was of secondary importance. Men came to the conclusion that they could reach heaven without the agency of this sacrament.

It was under circumstances like these that Liberal Christianity made its appearance in the history of the times. Liberal Christians built churches, settled ministers, and provided in all ways for the perpetuation of religious institutions. But where, alas! is the Communion? It never recovered from the blow it had received. It has lingered along in its wounded state, degraded, neglected, and almost forgotten. Years ago, good men, excluded from it, were forced to ask, "Of what use is it? Cannot we be saved without it?" And so, while they revived and handed down to us the primitive and apostolic worship, they failed to revive all the primitive and apostolic usages.

Thus, in a short space of time, did the fanaticism of one man — eloquent and untiring he certainly was — suffice to upset, in these New England States, a system in some of its principal features as old as the patriarchs, which had been remodelled and perpetuated by Christ, and which had come down from confessors and martyrs, through all phases and fluctuations of the Church, to the middle of the last century. And such is the perplexed and unhappy position of the Liberal Church at this day. What is the remedy? I see none but a swift return to the foundation on which the Prophets and the Apostles stood.

And now once more the question arises, "What

meaneth this service?" A summary answer is given in the words of Scripture. It is for a sign and a memorial, which shall be to us and to our children for ever. In the words of Christ, we do it in remembrance of him.

But allow me here a little breadth of remark. And referring generally to subjects of sentiment and feeling, I might ask, Of what use are a multitude of things? For instance, Of what use is it to shake hands, or to employ terms of salutation or benediction, in meeting or parting? True friendship rests not for proof on acts like these, and one may be an arrant hypocrite therein. But suppose these courteous customs should cease from human intercourse; would that be well? Why do we employ the expletive "Sir," or "Ma'am," in our affirmations and negations with our parents and elders? The Quakers answer simply "No" and "Yes." Would you like to have your children imitate that practice? These things are for a sign and a memorial. Of what use is a bow when friends pass each other in the street? It is but a tilt of the vertebræ of the neck, a dash into the air of the capital member of the body. Yet, let an acquaintance fail thus to testify his recognition, and you feel at once what the force of that little movement is. It is a sign, a memorial. It is a proof of familiar recognition, of friendly regard. But it does not follow, I admit, that all who bow in passing are really your friends.

I might enumerate quite a list of the habitual courtesies of life, and ask, Of what possible use are they? An extreme utilitarianism might be puzzled

to discover it. The logic of airy transcendentalism on the one hand, or icy materialism on the other, well aimed, might demolish the whole code. How easy for sarcasm and ridicule to turn them into contempt. One may be, I shall not take it upon me to gainsay, a very good man, he may even love God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself, he may be industrious, benevolent, philanthropic, and never shake hands with anybody or bow when he walks the street. But what then? Shall we discard or neglect those gentle amenities? They are signs and memorials. They are exponents of ideas; they are expressions of feeling; they are a kind of articulate speech, the universal pantomime of the heart.

But may not a man observe all the courtesies of manner, and yet be base, most unprincipled at heart? Truly he may. One may smile and smile and be a villain still. Possibly there are some who put on an aspect of politeness, as some do a profession of religion, as a convenient and current mask for selfishness, duplicity, and fraud. Suppose one should thus reason with himself: "Where is the use of being courteous, polite, or civil? It all amounts to nothing. It is nothing, in fact, but words and looks and tone. There are certain persons of my acquaintance, very finished gentlemen,—they have the reputation of being the very mirrors of gentility. But I know them well. They are bad men. They covet fields, and take them by violence, pervert the judgment of the stranger, and take the widow's ox for a pledge. For myself, I will never more pretend to civility or courtesy."

What should we think of the reasonableness of such a deduction as that?

Let us take one or two illustrations from another class. There is the marriage ceremony, which we might challenge in the same way. What does it amount to? There is not necessarily any heart in it. People have been known to join hands, bestow rings, and plight their troth, without a particle of affection in their hearts. Even the best-intentioned vows are easily broken, and scores do not live up to their wedding covenant. Why not, then, dispense with all these seals and tokens?

There is the temperance pledge, to which many attach great value and importance. The same question still returns, "Of what real use is it?" Cannot a man be strictly temperate, are there not countless numbers of men who are thus temperate, who have never taken that pledge?

Let me take even so familiar a thing as a letter from a friend, from a child if you will, and I ask, What does it signify? Your child can love you, think of you, cherish the most filial feelings towards you, and yet not write you a single line. But if a child of yours, long absent, should be thus silent, it would be a great grief upon your heart. The letter in such cases becomes a sign, an invaluable, joyous sign and monument of remembrance and affection.

So I might take up the whole range of symbolism, and show its extent and importance, — how it enters into human intercourse, and manifests itself in all the circumstances and conditions of our being, and seems to exercise an important office in the develop-

ment and history of the race. But whatever I might advance on the subject in general, as well as what has been already said of particular instances, has an application to this question of the utility of the Communion. Obviously, it is for a sign and a memorial, and that, too, of events the most wonderful, and of a person the most august, that have illustrated the history of our world. We raise a monument to Washington, and celebrate his birth with cannon-roar and chime of bells, with bonfires, processions, and eulogy. Sometimes monuments are erected to public men of lesser note, to keep alive and deepen the memory of their deeds. And some, no doubt, are ready to say, that all memorials of this sort are best preserved in the heart, that these outward and material tokens of affection and interest are really irrational and useless. Yet, as we have already said, a desire for some palpable expression of this sort is revealed in the conduct of every man every day of his life; and we might justly conclude, that on the whole it approves itself to his reason and is agreeable to his nature.

Undoubtedly the practice may be carried too far. A sign may exist where there is nothing signified, it may be continued when all true devotion to the object commemorated has perished from the mind. A sign may originate from puerile or superstitious causes, it may be maintained by arts at once vile and mischievous, it may be employed by bad men for the worst of purposes. Romanism, and other collateral branches of the Church, if I understand the matter right, is full of such perversions. In the English Church, I believe, no one can receive the sacred em-

blems except upon his knees. This was ostensibly a sign of humility, but it likewise became an instrument of despotism. But need we in this discussion concern ourselves with extravagance and perversion? We know enough of that exists. Instances will occur to almost any mind without the pains of looking them up. No good thing has ever yet appeared, that has not at some period or other, or in some form or other, been abused.

The case before us is simply this. Christ, — if we are not in an error, if we do not mistake in the premises, — Christ instituted the Communion Supper as a sign and a memorial, to be observed by his followers in all generations; and the brief question is, Will we observe it? As rational, consistent men, will we yield obedience herein? Will we consent to this symbolic rite, as we do in so many other instances in our daily life? The same objections may be set up to this as are urged against memorials of other sorts; but as regards the latter, we have seen how little weight they are allowed to have. Why, then, should we suffer them to embarrass us in respect to this?

There is another consideration bearing upon this subject, of no small interest, and in some respects of special magnitude, affecting and sinking down into our deepest meditations, and awakening the liveliest solicitude. I mean, that just at this stage of human history, at this precise juncture of popular affairs, when art is busy, and trade maketh haste to be rich, when innumerable forms of material good occupy the hands and absorb the imagination, when politics

is winning the multitudes to its shrine, there is danger — shall I not say great danger? — of our forgetting and wholly neglecting Christian duty, spiritual obligations, and the salvation of the soul. Instead of diminishing their number, we ought rather to give more heed to, and multiply, the signs and memorials of a religious faith. And this is what we do in other matters. When danger is supposed to threaten the political union of the States, when disregard of the Constitution or of some enactment of Congress seems to be on the increase, then men talk to us the more about Washington, they repeat his Farewell Address, they print it over and over again, they circulate it in all directions; then they celebrate his birthday with unusual pomp; then the building of his monument goes cheerfully forward. All this is thought to be the part of wisdom, of discernment, of sound common-sense, to say nothing of enlightened and earnest patriotism. Who ventures to inquire, in such a case, What is the use? Men feel that there is a use in having and employing these signs and memorials. But is there no need, is there no propriety, in preserving and multiplying monuments to Christ, our spiritual Saviour? For, really, if we would but observe the commemorative Supper as we should, if we would revive a long dormant interest in that tender rite, it would be like raising new monuments to Jesus.

To return to the point to which reference was made in the opening of this discourse. The Jewish Passover was for all the people; the Lord's Supper, which takes the place of it, is likewise for all the people. This festival is as much for the people as the

Sabbath is, as prayer or preaching is, as the sun and the rain are. It would be perfectly absurd, at the very least it would be irrational and inhuman, to institute a religious sign and memorial, that should not be for all the people. What would be thought and said, if those who are constructing the monument to Washington in the city that bears his name should decree that only a limited, a select portion of the people, such as the managers themselves might deign to choose, should visit and inspect that lofty memorial?

The Lord's Supper is for a sign and a memorial of Christ,—of his character, of his goodness, his sacrifice; it is a sign of God's mercy to us in Christ. Moreover, on our part, it is a sign. Of what? That one has been miraculously converted? There is no such thing. It is a sign of a belief in Christ; and we all are to some good degree believers in him. It is a sign of some interest in the Christian salvation. This is what it is *a sign* of; it is not positive proof, any more than many other signs we employ are proofs of what they signify. Keeping the Sabbath is a sign of regard to the God of the Sabbath, yet many who observe the day may possibly have no such regard.

It is a sign for us and for our children. Yes! That is it. We feel in regard to Washington, in regard to our venerated forefathers, that whatever pertains to them is for a sign, not only for us, but also for our children. So is this commemorative Christian ordinance for the children. This was the idea in the Jewish dispensation. It was the idea in the

Christian dispensation. I mean, that the primitive disciples, the early Fathers of the Church, administered the sacraments to their children. What, then, wait we for? For George Whitefield and the sentiment with which he inoculated the country? The turn he gave to the popular mind on this subject has only rendered the Communion a stumbling-block to many, has seriously diminished its influence, and threatens the utter extinction of the ordinance in this portion of Christendom. For the last forty years revivals or seasons of extraordinary religious excitement have alone supplied the dwindling ranks of the so-called members of the Church. Since the memorable year 1831, these unusual phenomena have been less and less frequent, and the number of communicants has been diminishing in an equal ratio.

But I would that this religious sign and memorial, this festive and commemorative Christian rite, might more and more abound. There is no danger of a liberal, enlightened, rational community making too much of it. Indeed, that is not the alternative which alarms our fears. The rite exists, it has been authoritatively established by Christ himself, it has perpetuated itself in all ages of the Church. We all recognize its propriety. But it has been obscured, scandalized; it lies buried beneath a pile of cant, error, and perversion.

Will we attempt to restore it, my friends? If we do not make the attempt, if Liberal Christians do not come to the rescue and rally for its recovery, then this Christian ordinance, so far as the New England Congregational Church is concerned, is

threatened, I fear, with ultimate and complete extinction.

I would revive it for the intrinsic excellence of its subjective power. The Communion is a season of great reflective interest; it suggests deep and solemn thoughts; its prevailing effect is calm, temperate, quiet meditation. It makes us serious, but not sad; it subdues without depressing us. If we set a higher value on this sacrament, if we entered upon it with greater freedom, if it were upheld by a more general sympathy, if all classes and all ages were unrestrained from uniting in it, I venture to say that nothing in the varied and eventful history of our lives would impart to us more solid satisfaction, or contribute more to those undefinable but palpable impressions that form the character, and travel on with us from youth to manhood and old age. We should anticipate the periods of this holy festival with joy, and the experience of them would be savory and inspiring. In our solitary thought we should recur to them with avidity, and at the hour of death we should look back upon them with composure and peace.

I would revive it for the sake of its sanctifying effect. It keeps us from sin, and quenches our inclination to it; and this by a very direct and intelligible process. It brings us into immediate contact with what is holy; its suggestions are holy, its author is holy. When temptation assails us, and the powers of darkness threaten our security, if there be a spot to which one can flee for refuge, it is the table of the Lord.

I would revive it for the sake of its cementing

element. A free participation in the Communion promotes the beauty, the edification, and strength of the local Church. What sight could be more pleasing than this large body of men, women, and children fellowshipping one another, banding together for the highest spiritual purpose, and bearing testimony to their mutual interest in the great salvation? Having eaten and drunk one with another, having shared together the hospitality of our Lord, having sat down together in that banqueting-house where the banner over us is love, would not our hearts be more closely knit, our contrarities be extinguished, and our whole life move on in greater harmony and satisfaction? Such an exercise would seem to be "an opening of the way, a highway for our Lord." Could the example spread, if there could be a general and devout observance of this rite in every congregation, could there be at some season of the year a mass Communion, a meeting of the entire city to celebrate their Saviour's death, truly we should feel that the millennial day had dawned. By such a spectacle our youths would early become wedded to the Church, nor would the busy pursuits of manhood alienate them from it.

The Communion is not so much a test as an aid of character. If it be in any sense the reward of attainment, it is also the harbinger of hope. Its aspect is not always towards the past, but its gaze is also directed to the future, and it points not so much to the fruits of past experience as to the crown that is to be acquired. It addresses not a select class, but the average condition of men. It does not offer

itself to the ripe believer exclusively, nor does it follow the incorrigible sinner to compel him to come in; but seating itself, so to speak, within the open area of the Church, it benignantly extends its benefits to the assembled congregation.

My friends, I have no undue attachment to the rites of the Church. Technically speaking, we have but two, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Protestantism and Puritanism have made sweeping work with the trappings and the furniture of the old Church. Little is left to us save the bare walls. Only these two rites remain. I think our position, liberal, rational, intellectual, free, admirably fits us to take a just account of them. We may strip them of superstition, and still regard them with reverence; we may dissipate the mystery that has hitherto enveloped them, and carefully preserve the original structure; we may rescue them from the dominion of a blind faith, and associate them with the analogies of the sharpest intellectuality; we may love them without worshipping them, and be benefited by them without becoming dupes. We accept, we cherish the Communion as a means of grace, an institution designed to bring and keep us near to Christ, an instrumentality, which, like prayer, like the Sabbath, like preaching, God will bless to our redemption and ultimate sanctification.

SERMON XIV.



THE GOSPEL: GOOD NEWS TO ALL PEOPLE.

I BRING YOU GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY, WHICH SHALL BE
TO ALL PEOPLE. — Luke ii. 10.

GOOD or glad tidings. I would invite attention to the word and to the thing. First, the word. There are two terms, the Greek, *Evangeli*, and the Saxon, *Gospel*, both meaning, in common English, good news, glad tidings. The text may read thus: I bring you the Gospel of great joy. I remark that, wherever the word Gospel is found in the New Testament, it means this glad tidings, good news. The Gospel according to John is the good news according to John. Christ says, Repent and believe the Gospel, believe the glad tidings, the joyful intelligence. Mark commences his history in this wise: "The beginning of the Gospel," the glad tidings, "of Jesus Christ." "Woe to me," says Paul, "if I preach not the Gospel," the good news.

Again, the word *to preach*, in the New Testament, is from the same *εὐαγγέλιον*, *evangel*, and means to announce news. The two words, *preach the*

Gospel, are in the original often contained in one word, meaning to announce, proclaim, declare intelligence. We read, "The disciples departed, preaching the Gospel," that is, announcing, making the glad announcement, telling the tale. The noun *evangel*, *gospel*, means good news, and the verb *evangelize*, *gospelize*, means to announce or proclaim good news. We read of Philip the Evangelist, and "some prophets, some evangelists," that is, annunciators, messengers. Our word *angel* comes from this same root, *eu-angel*; and *angel* means literally a messenger or relater of news. There is in the Bible no adjective *evangelical*. There is *evangel*, good news; *evangelize*, to announce good news; *evangelist*, the annunciator of good news; but no *evangelical*. *Evangelical* is a word of modern composition. It really means that which relates to the glad tidings. An evangelical church, or an evangelical doctrine, is a church or doctrine containing the good news. In the text, then, the angel or messenger of God, said, I evangelize you. I tell you good news, glad tidings. So far, then, the word *evangel*, *gospel*, *tidings*, means no more than the word *news*, *intelligence*, *information*.

Secondly, the thing. What was this good news, this Gospel? What did the angel announce? For a newspaper to say, We have received some valuable information, some very interesting news, is saying nothing. What is the information, or news, is the point that alone concerns us. What was the pleasant intelligence of the heavenly messenger? He came a great way, as we may well suppose, on an

important errand. What was the errand? In plain words, what was the Gospel? Christ went about preaching the Gospel, announcing the glad tidings. What did Christ preach or announce? His last command was, Go, preach the Gospel, go, tell the glad tidings, to all nations. *What* pleasant intelligence was to be conveyed to all nations? I say the word *evangel, gospel, news, intelligence*, means nothing; it is simply a vehicular term. The great question is, *What is* the news or evangel, what is the thing conveyed to us? "Glad tidings"; tidings of what? The messenger has arrived, and he has something to tell us; tell us what? It is something good, it is good news, an evangel, a gospel. We are all the more curious to know what it is.

Is it, as our Universalist brethren teach, that all will go to heaven when they die? That certainly were good news. Is it, as our Calvinistic brethren teach, that only certain ones, the specially elect, the irresistibly moved, will be saved? That would hardly fulfil the promise of the messenger, since he says it is good news for all people. Is it, as our Roman Catholic brethren teach, that such only as are baptized will be saved? I think it is not any of these things. Is it news that a babe is born, Christ the Saviour? But that does not explain its full purport. For still the inquiry arises, What is that little babe to do? How is he to promote the happiness of mankind? It is news of peace on earth. Glorious, ecstatic intelligence! But merely announcing peace does not silence the noise of battle, or beat swords into ploughshares or spears into pruning-

books. There is a mystery in this affair, a mystery of the Gospel or good news, not yet perfectly solved. It is called the Gospel or good news of the blessed God ; that is, it comes from God ; and the Gospel or good news of Christ, because it relates to Christ ; and the Gospel or good news of salvation, because it concerns our deliverance from sin and evil. But none of these meet the question fully.

By all the writers of the New Testament, it is called the Gospel, or good news, of the kingdom, and of the kingdom of God. And as I have said the word *good news* is contained in the original words rendered *to preach*, so where it says Christ and the Apostles went preaching the kingdom of God, the same is meant as if it said they went announcing the good news or proclaiming the glad intelligence of the kingdom of God. This, then, brings the subject a little more into the region of familiar ideas. The mystery begins to unfold. It is something about a kingdom, a kingdom of God here on the earth. Now we read that the law, the Mosaic law, and the prophets, were until John, but since that time the kingdom of God is preached, evangelized, proclaimed. Something new is to take place. A new dispensation of God in the affairs of men is promised, and it is called the kingdom or sovereignty or intimate rule and communication of God. This kingdom Christ went everywhere preaching, proclaiming ; he told all his disciples to preach it, he ordered it to be preached to all nations under heaven ; he illustrated it in his teachings by the mustard-tree, a farmer sowing seed, leaven, hidden treasure,

a fisherman's net. He said he that was least in that kingdom was greater than John; that this kingdom was not here or there, but in us; that little children belonged to it. The good news, gospel, or evangel, then, was that God, Jehovah, the Supreme One, was to be sovereign, legislator, father, the portion and hope of all men. "So," says the angel, "I bring you good news of great joy, which shall be to all people." So Christ says to all men, Repent, reflect, change your minds, ponder deeply the matter, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. We read that Joseph of Arimathea was one who waited for the kingdom of God. There was much curiosity aroused on the subject, and many misapprehensions; people did not perfectly understand Christ, and they began to ask him when the kingdom of God should come. When Paul was taken to Rome, and the people began to crowd about him, to hear what he had to say, we read that he expounded and testified the kingdom of God unto them.

But this is called *news*. What was there new about it. Had not God always reigned in the earth? In a sense he had. But there were many false gods, there was much superstition, much wrong and violence. People had not the knowledge of the one true God. They did not know of the infinite, eternal, unitary Truth and Goodness. They did not know that God really loved them, that the Creator of all and the immanent Life of the universe was their Father in heaven. The little children in the wilds of Scythia were never taught to pray, Our Father which art in heaven. The armed phalanxes of the

Roman empire had never been taught to feel that all men were their brothers. It was news to the Athenians, that God who made the world needed not temples to dwell in, and that all men were made of one blood. It was news to the Samaritans, that a person of Jewish extraction could imagine God could be worshipped anywhere else than at Jerusalem. The Syrophenician woman thought her place was with the dogs under the table. The Christian movement was a novelty in the earth.

But it was not wholly a new thing. It was indeed a very old thing, — so old, men had lost the memory of it. Let us remark that Paul says the Gospel, the good news, was preached before unto Abraham. A very long time ago, then, this thing had been spoken of. What was this old evangel, this message to the ancient Patriarch? The Gospel had been preached unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. The tenor of the Gospel or glad tidings to Abraham was precisely similar to that of the angels at the Nativity, or that by Jesus Christ. Here there is a remarkable coincidence. If Paul is to be trusted, the same Gospel or glad tidings of which Christ was the minister had been announced years before to Abraham. The Gospel or good news to Abraham, summarily stated, was the annunciation of God's most gracious purposes towards the whole human race. The Gospel or good news by Jesus Christ was, then, a very old thing. At the same time it was a new thing, inasmuch as the great mass of mankind had never heard or dreamed of it, and those who were in proper possession of the fact, the Jews,

seemed wholly to have forgotten it. God did enter into covenant with Abraham and with his seed for ever, and did promise that in him and his seed all nations should be blessed.

This covenant seems, I say, to have been forgotten. The record of it, preserved, indeed, in the sacred books of the Jews, was overlooked, or at least misapprehended. Here was a guaranty of universal grace, so to say, under the hand and seal of Jehovah, which slumbered amidst the musty archives of things that were. There was no unitary God, no unitary humanity, no unitary spirit. The Jews loathed the Samaritans, the barbarians yelled in the woods, the Romans ravaged the world. Yet thoughtful minds had ever remembered these things; the fires of a true philanthropy burned in here and there a breast. There were those in every nation who feared God and worked righteousness. Many a heart presaged the better day coming. It was impossible for a Jew even to read the words of Isaiah or the other prophets, without a presentiment of a change at hand.

Under these circumstances, Luke introduces us to the two family groups, that of the priest Zacharias, supposed to be at Hebron in the hill-country of Judea, and of the carpenter Joseph, at Nazareth. The wives of these two persons, Elizabeth and Mary, who were cousins, became miraculously with child. Mary goes to Hebron to visit her cousin. All parties trembled with anticipation. Great events were astir, in which they were particularly interested. Already the promise of the angel to Mary was, that

that which should be born of her should be called the Son of the Highest, that he should rule over the house of Jacob, and that of his kingdom there should be no end. Now, Mary, filled with a holy spirit, utters these remarkable words: I rejoice in Jehovah; surely, in what is about to transpire, God is very gracious unto us. His mercy is on them that fear him, from generation to generation. He hath holpen, or in this he does help his servant Israel, *as he spake to our fathers, TO ABRAHAM, and to his seed for ever.* Presently Elizabeth's full time came, and the neighbors assembled to congratulate with her on the event of the birth. The child John is treated after the manner of their law. Zacharias, the father, who had been dumb, regained his speech, and in the midst of the wondering company, filled with a holy spirit, being spiritually moved, blesses the Lord God of Israel, in that he had raised up a horn of salvation to the people, and that the dayspring was about dawning on the world, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, *the Gentiles; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he sware to our father ABRAHAM.* Mary leaves Hebron, and we next hear of her at Bethlehem, where Christ is born. And now the angels appear, using the words of our text: I bring you the Gospel, the "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."

I submit that here is a remarkable, a significant concatenation of events. The old Abrahamic covenant is kept in view from beginning to end. It all

turns, in the minds of parties concerned at least, on the oath sworn to Abraham, that in him should all the nations of the earth be blessed. This was the Gospel, the good news, preached before to him ; this was the Gospel Moses recognized when he said, " A prophet like unto me shall the Lord your God raise up unto you " ; this was the Gospel reflected in all the utterances of the prophets ; this was the Gospel, the glad tidings, the angel Gabriel announced to Elizabeth ; this was the Gospel or good tidings the angel of the Lord announced to the shepherds ; this was the Gospel or good news Christ and his Apostles went everywhere preaching. Finally and summarily, this is THE GOSPEL, the evangel, the good news. In other words, the news was, as we have seen, that the kingdom of God was come, a universal, divine, glorious kingdom, to embrace all nations ; or, in previous style of language, it was that the covenant, the old Abrahamic covenant, that had been narrowed to Judea, was to enlarge its boundaries so as to include the whole human race.

The first preacher of the Gospel was Jehovah, in the annunciation to Abraham ; the next, in the way of expectation and forecast, was Isaiah ; the next, the angels mentioned by Luke ; the next, Jesus ; and after him, the Apostles. Here is one continuous thing, so to say, in the Divine mind, partially developed in the course of ages by holy men of old, who spake as they were moved by a pure and heavenly spirit, and brought perfectly to light in the Son of Mary. Now the purpose of Jehovah begins to work its way in human affairs ; now it initiates itself into

human history. Christ, who studied the mind of God, who was ever in communion with the Spirit of God, after his baptism and unction, in the ripeness of his years, and perfect growth in grace, endowed with special powers, commences the labor of the inauguration of the empire of the Supreme. The one God, the true doctrine of whom the Jews had ever preserved, shall reign over the mixed varieties and multiplied shapes of thought and opinion. The worship of the one Infinite Intelligence, that made heaven and earth, shall enter alike the polished temples of the Greeks and the rustic fanes of the Druids. The partition-walls that have so long divided the human family shall be broken down. All are the offspring of one God, all are made of one blood, and universal love shall override the boundaries of states and supplant the strifes of neighborhoods. Neither Jewish nor Gentile altar need any longer burn with fire, or reek with blood ; for God, who is a spirit, is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Once, when the earth was filled with violence, God destroyed it with a flood. He will do so no more. There forever hangs his bow in the clouds, the token of his covenant to this effect. He will bless and save mankind. Even the Gentiles, who have been so long strangers from the covenant of promise, shall be so no more, but shall be fellow-heirs and citizens of the household of faith. The wild olive shall be grafted into the cultured stock. This was a sore point with the Jews. They insisted that none but such as had been circumcised and kept the law should be reckoned of the common body. This was the trying point with

Christ. The advocacy of this principle, so fundamental to the Divine plan, cost him his life, as it did that of Stephen.

We speak of Christianity as a new religion ; it was in important respects both new and old. We speak of the new covenant or testament ; it was also an old one, which God swore unto our father Abraham. Now the Gospel is not that men should repent ; it is the good news that the pale of the Divine covenant was enlarged, and men were urged to repent and change their manner of life, and conform to the new conditions. So Christ preached that men should repent, for the kingdom of heaven was at hand. So men were everywhere called to repent, change their minds, reform their ways, and practically accept the good news. Nor, again, is the Gospel faith ; it is, I say, good news, and men were required to have faith in the intelligence thus brought to them, and receive it into their souls, and act upon it in their lives. Abraham believed the Gospel, the good news that was announced to him, truly and fully believed what God told him, and this faith of his was accounted unto him for righteousness ; in other words, an excellence acceptable to God. The faith is one thing, and the intelligence on which that faith acts is wholly another thing.

To preach the Gospel is not the same thing as to preach faith and repentance ; to preach the Gospel is to preach the good news of God's gracious purpose to be the covenant God of the whole race. That is the Gospel, and faith and repentance are its auxiliaries, not its essence. For one to repent and

believe the Gospel is to repent and believe the good news, and enter into the covenant of God.

There are those words, "Before Abraham was, I am," — words that have puzzled us, but which yet contain an august, beautiful meaning. There is no reference to the corporeal preëxistence of Christ. Before the time of Abraham, Christ says, these ideas which I announce, this Divine purpose of blessing all nations which I cherish, this great object for which I live and am ready to die, existed; it existed in the nature of things, it moved in the thoughts of all the good and great of ancient time; especially was it part of the everlasting decrees of Jehovah. It presented itself to Abraham and to all the prophets after him, and in me is it about to come to pass. Before Abraham was, I am; that which I represent existed. The Gospel is preached now, and it was preached before to Abraham.

It is of course obvious that the word *Gospel* is frequently used not only for news, but for the substance of that news; it passes from the messenger to the message. It often passes from the mere announcement of the fact of intelligence into the statement of what that intelligence was, and stands for both of these things. Yet it adheres to the fundamental point, that the news was God's purpose to bless all nations.

Now this kingdom of God, this expanded covenant, concerns human beings; it brings men into a certain attitude to God and to one another. Christ is the mediator, agent, of this new order of things, and all assume an especial relation to him. Grouped

in this new position, coming together in this divine manner, with God over all and Christ the great leader, human beings constitute what in Scripture is called a Church, or the assemblage, the great society and fellowship of human beings. And Christ says, "On this rock will I build my Church." Church, empire of God, holy covenant relations, are tantamount terms. This Church, what we now call the Christian Church, takes in Jew and Greek, barbarian and Scythian, bond and free; families, communities, whole nations. The Gospel or good news was that the great mass of human beings were comprehended in the Divine plans. This is essential, obvious in all Scripture. The Gospel means this, or it means absolutely nothing.

What the angels came to announce, then, was precisely such a purpose. This is the mystery of the Gospel, and nothing else is that mystery. As Paul says, I have come into the full knowledge of the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets, teachers, *that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of God's promise*, the old Abrahamic promise, in Christ. And to me is given to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, to make all men see what is the fellowship, the commonness of the mystery which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, who did all the great work by Jesus. The angels at the Nativity came flushed and palpitating with this mystery, the myste-

rious intelligence that had been so long hid, which was, which solely was, which simply was, that not the Jews alone, but the Gentiles, that all nations, through Christ, should be blessed of God. This was the mystery that angels desired to look into, this was what had haunted the hopes and hearts of good men in all ages.

But how should it come about? How shall these others become with us partakers and fellow-heirs? How shall the pale of brotherhood and love be enlarged? Christ shall do it. Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, a deliverer, one who shall extricate you from your sad dilemma and save you from the dreadful consequences of your sins; "*a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of my people Israel*"! The secret is at last out, the mystery is revealed, the oath sworn to Abraham shall yet be fulfilled. The news has come, the glad tidings, the Gospel of the abounding grace of God is now to be made known. Christ comes to preach this Gospel; he will proclaim the glad tidings, he will undertake the work of covenant enlargement, he will establish God's kingdom in the earth, he will build upon the deep foundations the Church Universal. To-day is Christmas, Christ's festival occasion; we celebrate the initiation of these wonderful events. The sole reason why we, descendants of the barbarous Anglo-Saxon tribes, uncircumcised Gentiles, are permitted to meet here to-day, in this pure, elevated, civilized way, is, that Christ did break down the Jewish pale, and let the covenant blessings of God flow over the world. Christ might have lived and

died as he was born, a Jew, a good Jew, pious, benevolent, exemplary, loving. That was not his mission; that was not why God raised him up; that would not have accomplished the oath sworn to Abraham; it would have left the world just as he found it. No; through prayers and tears in his own soul, through temptations, through exhaustion and weariness, he must advance to his great work, even if the vista terminate in a dreadful hill, sheeted with darkness and surmounted with a cross; even if his blood, every pulse of which beat with love for humanity, by human hands should be torturously wrung from his heart.

It was suitable that the Gospel, the good news, should be proclaimed of angels, in mid-air. They rose above the walls of Jerusalem, they stood aloft where they could overlook the boundaries of Jewry; the whole earth was, as it were, spread out beneath their feet; and they flung the rosy token, the glad voice of salvation, to remotest nations, when they declared the Evangel was for all the people.

When the angels sung their Messianic hymn of peace on earth, good-will toward men; when, in after years, Christ sat with his disciples on the mountain, and opened to them the great principles of his universal kingdom; when Paul, on his way to Damascus, stricken by that marvellous apparition, received the commission which distinguished him as the Apostle of the Gentiles;—in the North of Germany, near the mouth of the Elbe, on the neck of the Danish peninsula and a few adjacent islands, dwelt a people of nomadic, Scythian origin. Their

abode was a tract of alternate marshes and wooded mountains; the shore was lashed and darkened by the wild storms that sweep down the northern seas. They had a blonde complexion, light hair, and blue eyes. Their clothes were short, and made of skins, they wore their hair of a great length, their faces were painted and tattooed after the manner of the New-Zealanders. They lived in huts woven of brush and plastered with clay, and sometimes made their abode in caves of the earth. They were ignorant, rude, idolatrous, and addicted to superstition. They described the Supreme Being as the father of combats and slaughter, and reckoned those his favorite children who fell on the field of battle. They possessed a free and resolute spirit, which signalized itself by alternate deeds of reckless daring and ensanguined ferocity. They sacrificed human beings to their Gods.

Such were the Anglo-Saxons prior to their invasion of Britain. They ultimately became a body of pirates, as terrible as the world has ever known; they scourged every sea with the fear of their name, and the savageness of their assaults. Of these people, in a direct line, are we descendants. Yet for these, too, Christ came. Following them in their career of conquest, the message of heavenly love crossed the British Channel; and while they were laying the foundations of a new empire on English soil, the truths of his Gospel came and dwelt among them. These barbarous tribes were embraced in God's covenant. They, too, were included among the nations to whom the Gospel was to be preached.

Through that eternal purpose of God, which made all nations to be partakers of his grace, we behold ourselves rescued from the thralldom of ancient superstition, purged of bloody rites, elevated above huts and caves and a lawless buccaneer life, and permitted this day to offer a pure worship to the Universal Father in a civilized sanctuary. Thus I trace the progress of the great Evangel; thus I see unfolded the magnificent projects of Jesus of Nazareth; thus I discern the divinity of the mission of the Son of God. I this day rejoice in that free grace which, breaking down the barriers of sectarian exclusiveness, reached and reconciled us who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenant of promise, and makes us fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Jesus Christ our Lord.

A P P E N D I X.

NOTE A.

THE associated action referred to by Mr. Judd in his letter, from which a quotation is given in the Preface to this volume, may be seen in the following extract from the Preamble to the Constitution of "THE ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITARIAN CHURCH OF MAINE," which was unanimously adopted by the Unitarian Convention held in Portland in September, 1852.

"We, the Unitarian Christians of Maine, ourselves and our posterity, are a Church; a part of the Church Universal, of the Church of God and Christ; a Church Congregational, Evangelical, Apostolic. We are the Church, not of creeds, but of the Bible; not of a sect, but of Humanity; seeking not uniformity of dogma, but communion in the religious life. We embrace in our fellowship all who will be in fellowship with us.

"Locally, and in a limited sense, a collection or society of Christians is a church.

"These Christians, with their families, uniting in regular assembly, for religious worship, instruction, growth, and culture, having the ordinances and a pastor, constitute a *parochial* church.

"These Christians, with their families, in any city, town, or precinct of the State, not having the forms and means

of regular religious service, and without a pastor, constitute an *unparochial* church.

“These several churches, considered as a whole, constitute THE UNITARIAN CHURCH OF MAINE.”

NOTE B. Page 199.

MR. JUDD, in the very commencement of his ministry, felt that the mere number of *church-members*, according to the prevailing use of that term, was no true test of the piety or Christian virtues of the people he had in charge; and holding that no believer in Christianity should be isolated from the Christian Church, he urged upon all the duty and the privilege of observing all the Christian ordinances. His continually increasing interest in this vital point led to the full development of his faith in THE BIRTH-RIGHT CHURCH.

In the fall of 1852 he prepared a condensed statement of his idea of the basis of a true church-organization, for the consideration of all the members of his parish, and for the acceptance and signature of all who should approve it. Several social meetings were subsequently held, from week to week, for a general discussion of the principles therein set forth, and a free expression of the most reserved minds was thus obtained. After earnest and mature deliberation, a vote was finally taken at an unusually full meeting, and the result was an almost unanimous voice of approval.

It was this vote to which Mr. Judd alludes in the Discourse to which this note belongs.

The statement referred to was afterward engrossed in a REGISTER prepared for the purpose; and the names of nearly every family constituting Christ Church have been subscribed to it.

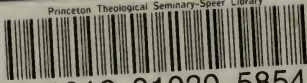








Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 01030 5854

